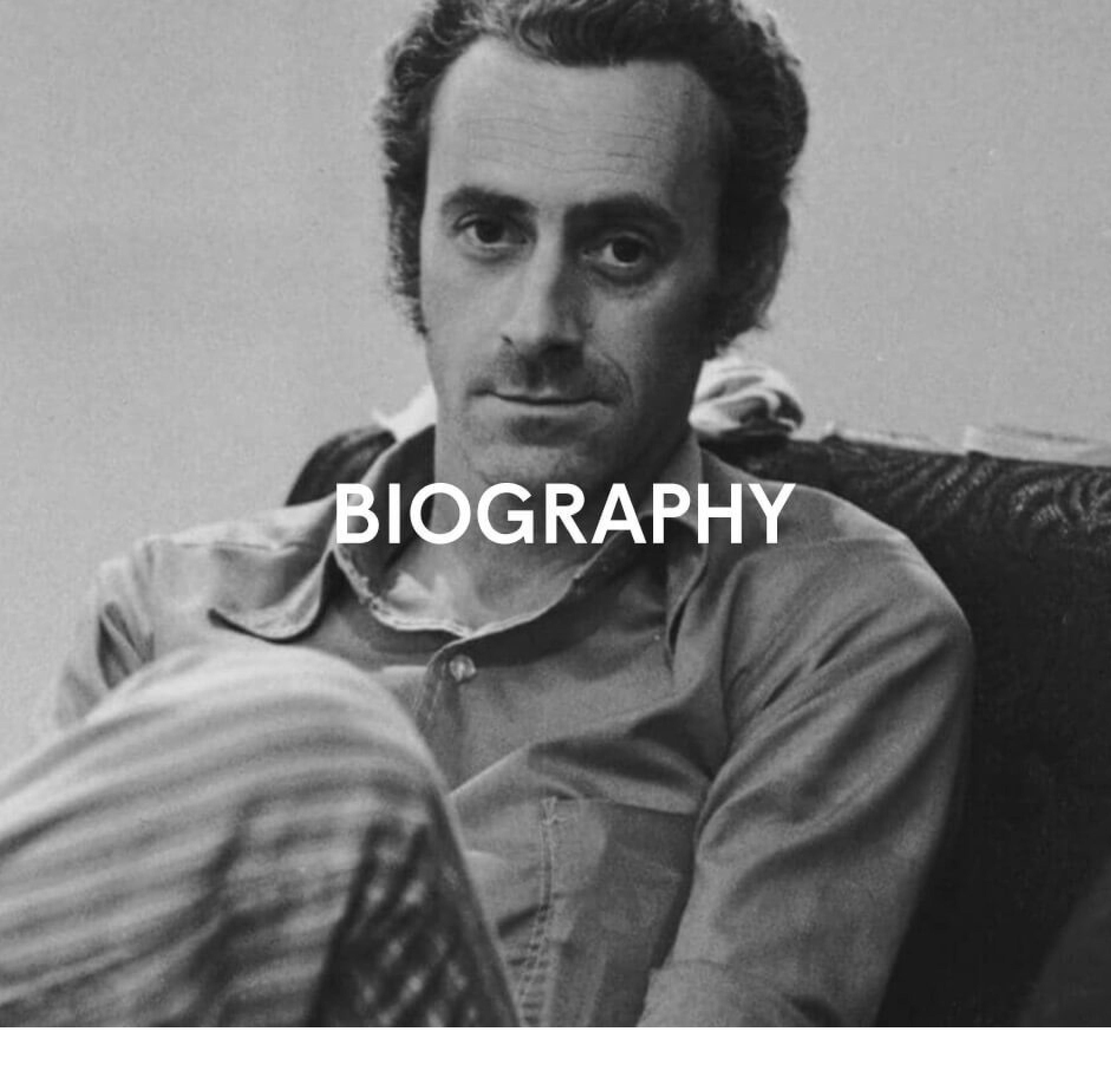
YVES GAUCHER

Life & Work

By Roald Nasgaard



Contents



BIOGRAPHY

Yves Gaucher (1934–2000) was one of Canada's foremost abstract painters of the second half of the twentieth century. He first made his mark as an innovative printmaker, winning international prizes for his work. After turning to painting in 1964 and for the rest of his life, he pursued his abstract style with relentless self-criticism and uncommon purity.

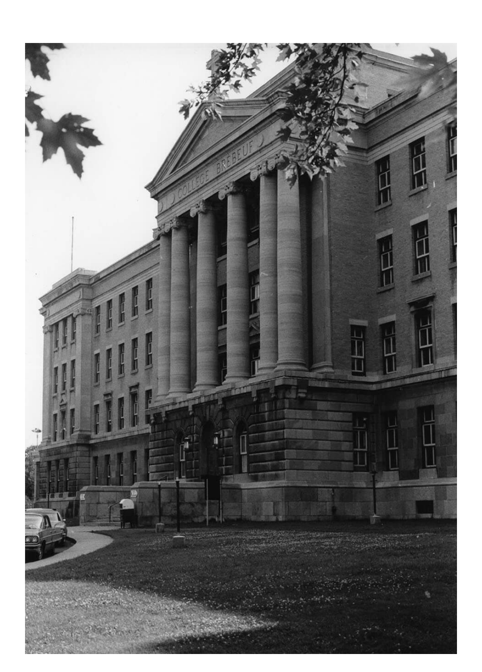
EARLY YEARS

Yves Gaucher was born in Montreal on January 3, 1934, the sixth of eight children. His father owned a pharmacy and also practised as an optometrist and optician. The business was sufficiently successful that Gaucher and his siblings attended the best Montreal schools. During the last years of his father's life the family lived in Westmount, an affluent residential area in the city.

Gaucher's school years were spent in the Catholic system. After grade school he attended the Jesuit-founded Collège Sainte-Marie and subsequently the Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf. By his own account he was an undisciplined student, but he developed a predilection for Greek and Latin literature, and drawing was his favourite diversion during study periods. Combining his two interests, however, proved fatal: he was expelled from Collège Brébeuf when he was caught copying an "indecent" image from ancient art (presumably a nude) from his illustrated Larousse dictionary. The school already had their eye on him as a potential troublemaker because his older brother had been expelled a few years earlier when a novel by Colette, one of the many authors banned by the clergy, was found in his briefcase.



Three-year-old Yves Gaucher in 1937.

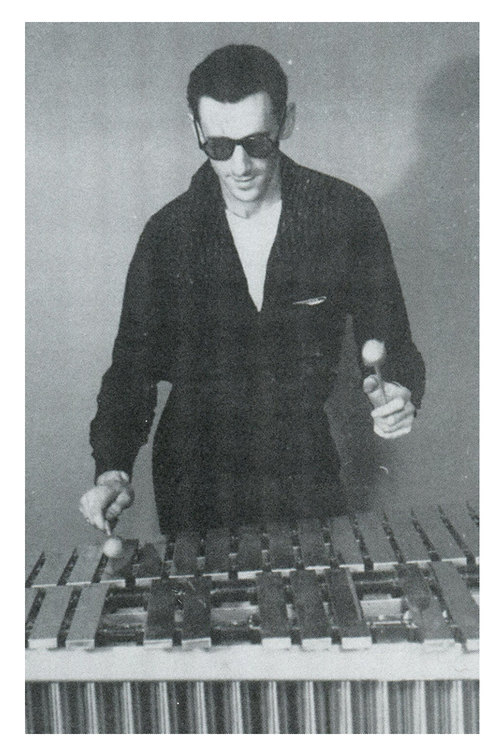


Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, at 3200 Côte-Sainte-Catherine, Montreal.

Gaucher had been very religious and even entertained the notion of becoming a priest. But the injustice of his expulsion turned him away from the church and eventually away from any organized system of belief. A year after his expulsion he switched to an English-language Protestant school, enrolling at Sir George Williams College, which later became a university but in 1952 was still functioning as a high school. It was there that he took his first art course. He never earned a degree.

A TIME OF INDECISION

Music had always been important to Gaucher. He was raised in a musical home, where everyone played an instrument. Gaucher's mother gave him one piano lesson, an event he remembers vividly as one of the central experiences of his childhood. He began to play trumpet at age twelve at the Collège Sainte-Marie and practised enthusiastically, becoming a solo trumpeter in the college orchestra.



Gaucher playing the vibraphone, c. 1951–52.

His first full-time job was with the CBC, where he started in the mailroom. But his real ambition was to become a radio announcer, and, in anticipation of having his own jazz program, he took courses to improve his English pronunciation. In the meantime he played gigs at night, even organizing a few jam sessions in 1955–56 at Galerie L'Actuelle, founded by Guido Molinari (1933–2004). By his own admission, however, he failed to grow technically as a musician.

From the CBC he went to work for the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company (or the Cunard Line—accounts differ), drawing cargo plans in Montreal during the summer and in Halifax for two winters, when the Montreal harbour was closed. He joined Imperial Oil in Montreal in 1951, starting again as mail boy, but making his first steps upward.

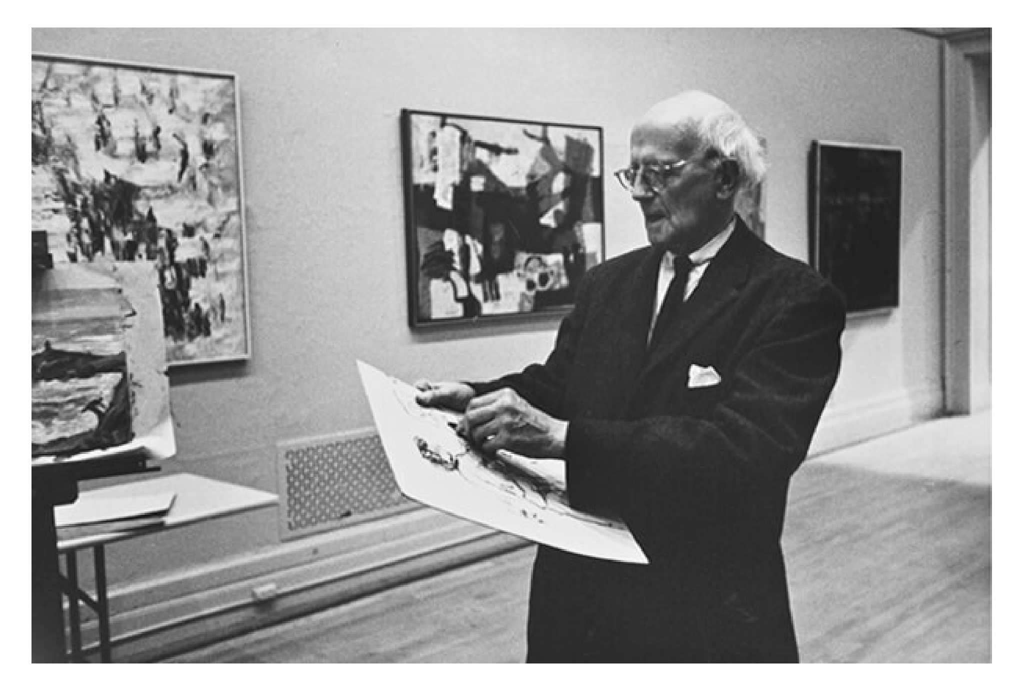


Georges Braque, *Still Life: Le jour*, 1929, oil on canvas, 115 x 146.7 cm, Chester Dale Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

During these years Gaucher continued to draw and paint in watercolours. In Halifax, where he discovered the work of Georges Braque (1882–1963) in a library book, he began to work more elaborately, intrigued by the French artist's distortions. In 1951, with a sheaf of drawings under his arm, Gaucher made a crucial visit to Arthur Lismer (1885–1969) at the School of Art and Design at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, which precipitated his decision to become an artist. Lismer was a founding member of the Group of Seven and a prominent teacher, and he was tough, Gaucher recalls, "but he put serious questions in my head for the first time. Did I want to be complimented or reassured, or what? He asked if I was ready to make sacrifices, in which case I ought to leave my job and take courses at the museum."[1]

In 1954 Gaucher resigned from Imperial Oil and enrolled in the museum school. But he stayed only one week: he discovered that for less money he could attend the École des beaux-arts de Montréal, and he switched schools. At the École his first teacher was Suzanne Rivard Le Moyne (1928–2012).

Gaucher refused to take courses that did not interest him. He knew what he wanted from the school, did not want to waste time, and felt competent to pick and choose his own program. After a year and a half he was expelled for insubordination, but a change in administration shortly afterward allowed him to return on his own terms, and he continued to attend until 1960.

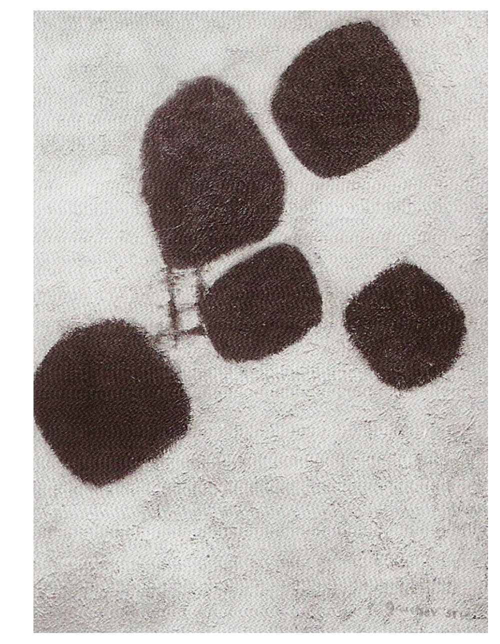




LEFT: Arthur Lismer in Montreal in 1967, photographed by Sam Tata. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Suzanne Rivard Le Moyne painting in Paris, 1959.

THE PRINTMAKER

Gaucher had enrolled at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal with the intention of becoming a painter. But Automatiste spontaneity—the prevailing avant-garde model in Montreal in the mid-1950s—made him uneasy, the way a painting could change "with one brush stroke." It was not his "way of behaviour." Nor was he yet ready for the geometric developments in abstraction on view at places like Galerie L'Actuelle, established by Guido Molinari (1933–2004). As he recalled, "I wasn't impressed with the kind of work I saw there … Mondrian-inspired art,"[2] presumably referring to the work of Fernand Toupin (1930–2009) and other early Plasticiens.

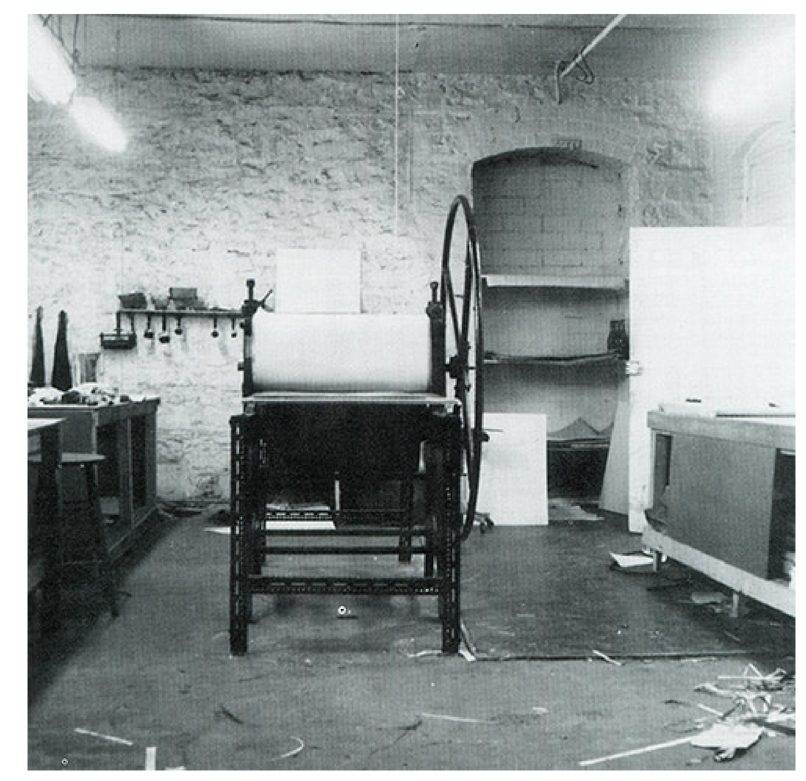


Yves Gaucher, *Conclusion 230*, 1959–60, oil on canvas, 180 x 120 cm, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

His own work, however, was beginning to get attention. Writing in 1960, the critic Françoise de Repentigny presciently singled out one of his abstract paintings, *Conclusion 230*, 1959–60, in a group exhibition at the École, describing it as "transcendental," a work of "spiritual expression."[3] One of the factors that had persuaded him to return to the École des beaux-arts was a course in graphics run by Albert Dumouchel (1916–1971). Gaucher was accepted into it on the basis of some line engravings of severely refined landscape motifs that he had exhibited in 1957 in his first solo show, at the Galerie L'Échange.

In 1958 and early 1959, having bought a handbook of techniques, Gaucher began to experiment with Old Master etching techniques but quickly found etching too limiting. He bought a press and set it up in a studio he had created on the second floor of his parents' two-car garage in Westmount. In 1960 he became the founding president of the Association des peintres-graveurs de Montréal, and devoted the years 1960–64 exclusively to printmaking.

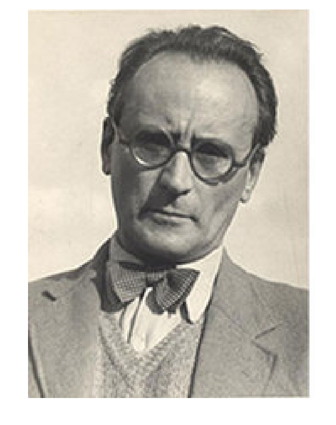
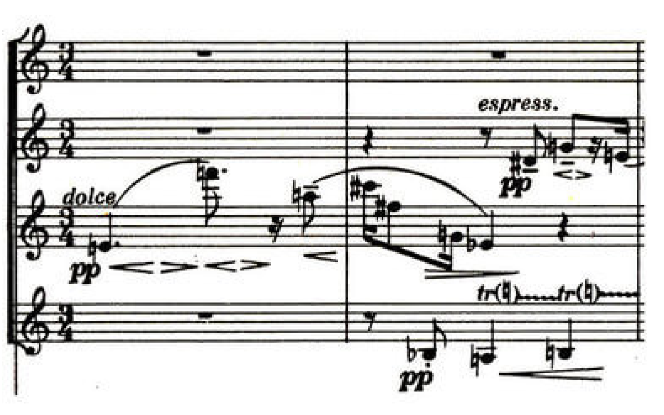
Printmaking, in contrast to painting, could be broken down into staged processes that gave him lots of time to reflect. Step by step he set out to free himself from traditional printing practices with vigorous experimentation and innovation, working especially with unprecedented heavy embossing techniques. He quickly won national and international attention—as well as prizes at major print shows from across Canada to Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, and Grenchen, Switzerland—and had solo shows at Galerie Godard-Lefort in Montreal and the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York. From the latter, the Museum of Modern Art in New York purchased *In Homage to Webern No. 2*, 1963.

LEFT: Gaucher at the École des beaux-arts in Montreal, c. 1954–55. RIGHT: Gaucher's studio on Albert Street, in the Saint-Henri neighbourhood of Montreal, 1963.

NEW YORK AND PARIS

In 1959 Gaucher began taking regular trips to New York both to satisfy his appetite for jazz and to visit museums and art galleries. He closely followed current developments, including the various reactions to Abstract Expressionism, Pop art, and Op art, and read *Art News* magazine and *It Is: A Magazine for Abstract Art*. During this period he also developed a passion for Indian music, along with Eastern philosophy, which would have a profound influence on his art.

LEFT: Composer and conductor Anton Webern. RIGHT: The first bars of Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra* show the atonal structure of the music that inspired Gaucher.

His first visit to Paris, in the fall of 1962, offered a number of life-changing experiences. He attended a concert that featured the music of Pierre Boulez, Edgard Varèse, and Anton Webern. Webern's atonal music disturbed him, because it threw into doubt all his preconceptions about art. In his suite of three prints from 1963 titled In Homage to Webern, Gaucher strove to find visual equivalents for the new music.



Mark Rothko, *No. 1, White and Red*, 1962, oil on canvas, 259.1 x 228.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, © 2014 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / SODRAC (2015).

In Paris he visited the exhibition of Mark Rothko (1903–1970) that he had already seen the previous year at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the large paintings of the American Abstract Expressionist becoming a model for how he wanted his future painting to enrapture its viewers into a state of sustained trance. As well, seeing the work of Rothko and other American artists like Jasper Johns (b. 1930) and Morris Louis (1912–1962) in the context of Paris made it clear to him that his artistic sensibility had more affinities with contemporary New York painters than with European art.

In 1962, on the strength of a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, Gaucher rented a larger studio in the Montreal neighbourhood of Saint-Henri. By 1963 he was supporting himself with monthly stipends from the three galleries that showed his work, in Montreal, Toronto, and New York. The same year, he met Germaine Chaussé; they married in October 1964. The couple rented a rambling flat in Old Montreal, where Gaucher set up a press in one room and a painting studio in another.



Charles Gagnon, *Luncheon on the Grass*, 1965, oil on canvas, 239 x 183 cm, collection of Pierre Lassonde.

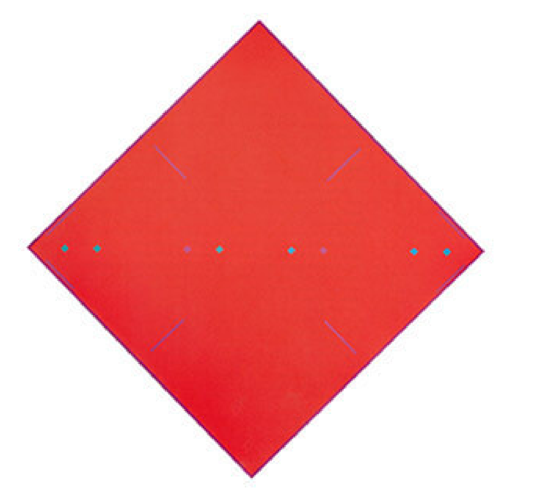


Jean McEwen, *Verticales descendant des mauves*, 1962, oil on canvas, 228.6 x 190.5 cm, Joan and Martin Goldfarb Collection, York University, Toronto, © Estate of Jean McEwen / SODRAC (2015).

By 1965 he was sharing a building on Saint-Paul Street East with fellow Montreal artist Charles Gagnon (1934–2003), where Jean McEwen (1923–1999) joined them the following year. The larger studio space allowed for bigger paintings. In 1975 Gaucher moved into a former church on De Bullion Street. Although Gaucher and his fellow Plasticiens came into full maturity during the years of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, they were not actively political. Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960) and the Automatistes had already fought the hard battles for artistic freedom in Quebec and had cleared the way for the more purely aesthetic pursuits of the generation that followed.

THE PAINTER

In 1965, with his Square Dances series of paintings, Gaucher entered fully formed into the world of hard-edge chromatic abstraction that, along with the Stripe Paintings of Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and the targets of Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), became the signature style for Montreal in the 1960s.



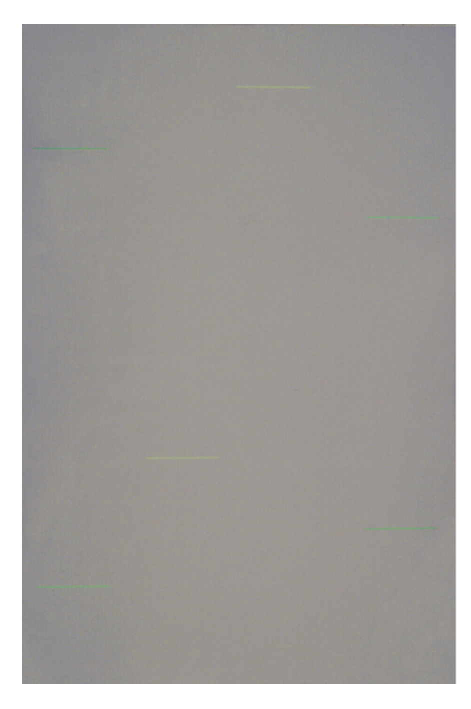




LEFT: Yves Gaucher, *Square Dance, Red Modulations*, 1965, acrylic on canvas, 219 x 219 cm, private collection, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015). RIGHT: Guido Molinari and Claude Tousignant with their paintings, reproduced in the catalogue for the exhibition *Canada 101*, Edinburgh International Festival, Edinburgh College of Art, 1968.

During that year he participated in a spate of exhibitions throughout the United States devoted to optical art, including *The Deceived Eye* at the Fort Worth Art Center, Texas; *1 + 1 = 3: An Exhibition of Retinal and Perceptual Art* at the University of Texas in Austin and Houston; and *Op from Montreal* at the University of Vermont in Burlington. In 1966 Gaucher, along with Sorel Etrog (1933–2014) and Alex Colville (1920–2013), represented Canada at the 33rd Venice Biennale, and he had his second solo exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York.

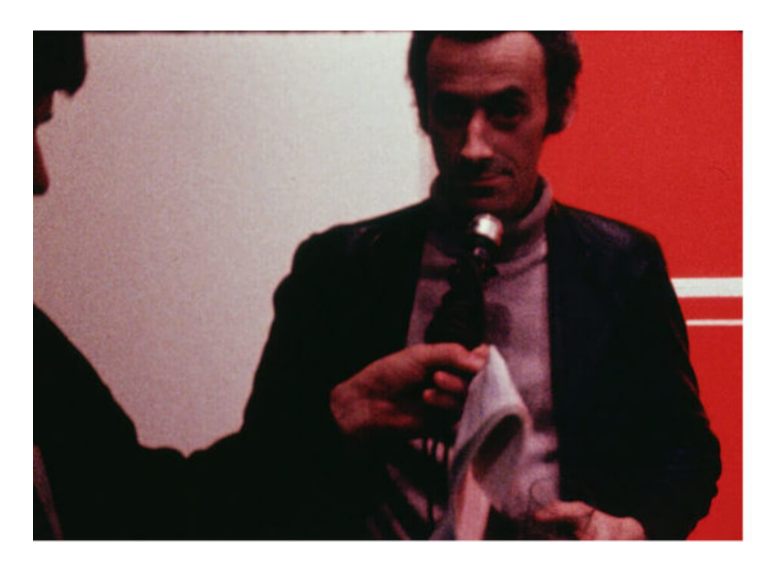
Gaucher's culminating work of the 1960s was a series of some sixty Grey on Grey paintings that he executed between 1967 and 1969. Three of these, including *Alap*, 1967, were shown in the 1968 exhibition *Canada 101* in Edinburgh, where they strongly impressed the British critic and curator Bryan Robertson, who described Gaucher as a "dazzling artist," who had made "what are possibly the most beautiful and original—and awe-inspiring—paintings I've seen anywhere since the advent of Pollock and Rothko."[4] An exhibition of twenty-two of the Grey on Greys (along with his In Homage to Webern and Transitions series) was curated by Doris Shadbolt for the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1969 and travelled to Edmonton and the Whitechapel Gallery, London, England.





LEFT: Yves Gaucher, *Alap*, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 274.3 x 182.9 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015). RIGHT: Gaucher holding a paint roller in his studio on Saint-Paul Street East, Montreal, c. 1968-69.

Gaucher stopped the Grey on Grey series at the end of 1969, concluding that he had effectively explored all the possibilities originally opened up by the Webern prints six years earlier. He then entered a period of doubt about how to proceed. To clear his head—and in response to an invitation to participate in the exhibition *Grands formats*, at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in 1970—he executed a large (2.7 x 4.6 m) red painting with techniques and stylistic traits that in innumerable ways ran against the grain of hard-edge painting as he had already defined it, if not against the very core of his being.





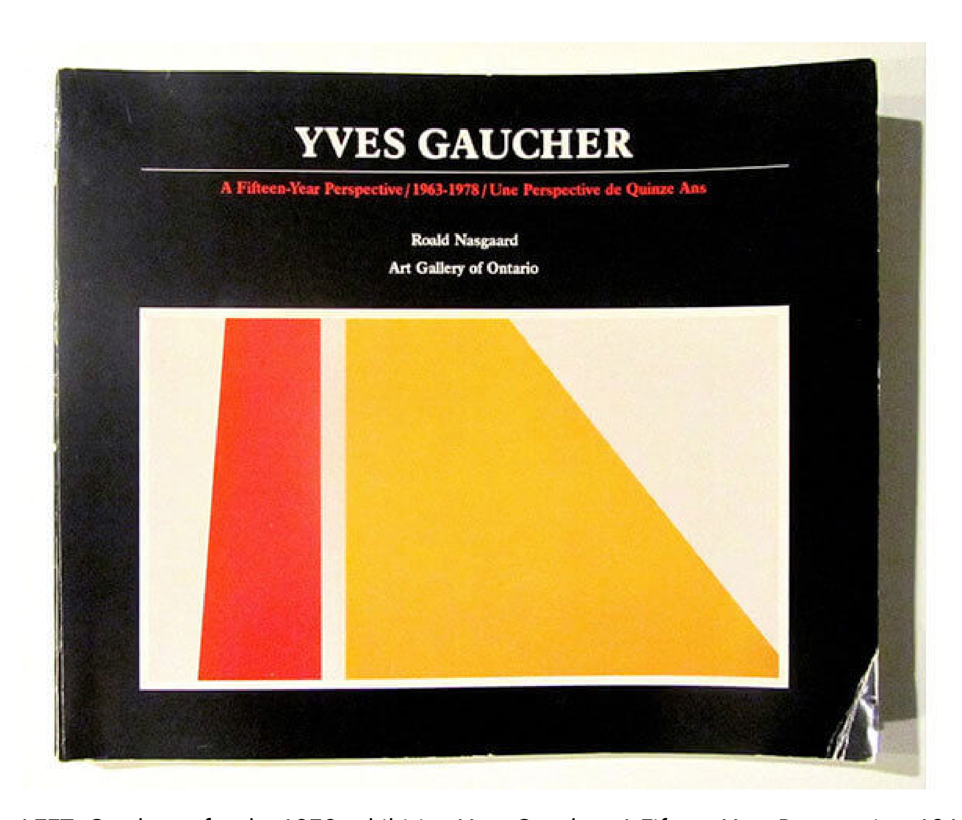
LEFT: In Gagnon's film Gaucher is interviewed by Klaus Fuchs in front of his painting *R69* at the opening of *Grands formats* at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in 1970. RIGHT: Charles Gagnon, *R69*, 1969– (unfinished), 16mm film, colour, sound, 53 min.

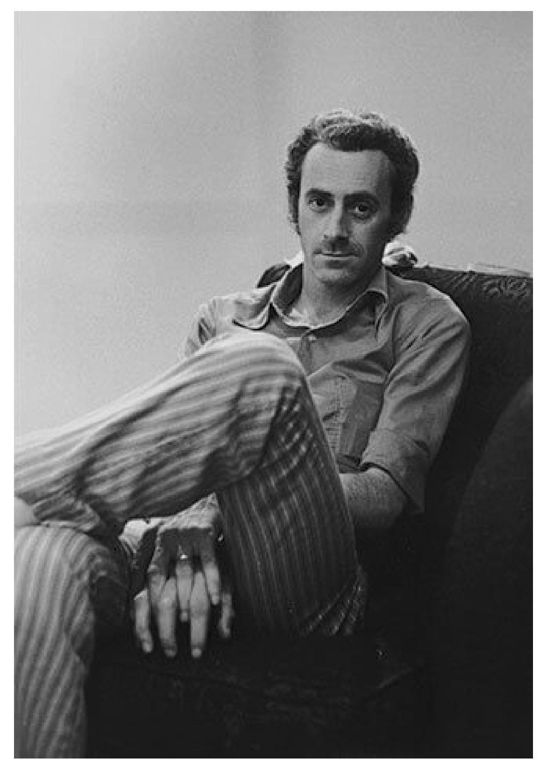
Gaucher's painting crisis may have been existentially grave, but he enjoyed the opportunity to make an outrageous painting. Footage of Gaucher making this red painting became the impetus for Charles Gagnon's film *R69* (begun in 1969 but left unfinished at his death), which also includes a mock interview that reveals an essential mischievous side of Gaucher's personality.

By 1971, however, Gaucher had regained his stride and over the next three decades produced one astonishing series of paintings after another, never losing his creative momentum. Throughout this time he also continued to draw and make prints.

CONTINUAL SUCCESS

Even as art world fashions changed during the late 1960s and the 1970s, and painting was dismissed as an outmoded practice from a number of directions—Minimalism, Conceptual art, postmodernist theory—Gaucher continued to sustain an active professional career, getting more regular exposure in
Toronto than in Montreal, through commercial galleries such as Gallery Moos, Marlborough Godard Gallery (later Mira Godard Gallery), and Olga Korper Gallery. The New York Cultural Center staged a retrospective exhibition in 1975.





LEFT: Catalogue for the 1979 exhibition *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978* at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Gaucher in 1971, photographed by Gabor Szilasi.

In 1976, in *Yves Gaucher, Paintings and Etchings: Perspective 1963–76* at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, he showed a large selection of Grey on Grey paintings, which had been little seen in Montreal. The Art Gallery of Ontario's 1979 exhibition *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978* followed his painting career through to the end of his Jericho series. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Gaucher had regular exhibitions at public

galleries that included the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; the Canadian Cultural Centres in Paris, Brussels, and London; 49th Parallel in New York; The Power Plant in Toronto; and the Musée du Québec (now the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec).

In the meantime he and his wife, Germaine, purchased and renovated a house in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, a residential neighbourhood in Montreal's west end, where they raised two sons, Denis and Benoît. Gaucher, if he was ascetically exacting in his art, enthusiastically enjoyed the good life. He and Germaine travelled extensively, collected pre-Columbian art, cultivated exotic orchids, and built a Zen garden. His humour was wry and his studio conversation a mixture of dead seriousness and mischievous evasion, especially when the topic was his own art practice. He was a tough negotiator with his dealers, sometimes breaking with them precipitously and bitterly.



Gaucher in 1996, photographed by Richard-Max Tremblay.

Always individualistic in his stance, Gaucher was nevertheless a prominent figure on the Canadian art scene. In 1966 he was appointed assistant professor at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University), where he taught printmaking and then painting until his death. He was a prominent member of Canada Council of the Arts advisory committees and juries, who remembered with particular fondness the late 1960s and the 1970s when juries made studio visits and formed personal relationships with colleagues across the country. In 1981 he was named a Member of the Order of Canada. He died in Montreal on September 8, 2000. The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal staged a comprehensive retrospective of Gaucher's paintings and graphic work in 2003.



KEY WORKS

The extraordinary quality and special character of Gaucher's art can be seen in the following essential works, selected to represent the major stages of his development. Keep in mind that the experience of viewing Gaucher's work, or any abstract painting, is significantly diminished in reproduction. This applies especially to the Grey on Grey paintings. The installation shots convey the visceral presence of the works better than standard flat images.

ASAGAO 1961



Yves Gaucher, *Asagao*, 1961
Etching and embossed copper printed on laminated papers, 48.4 x 33.4 cm
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

During the early 1960s Gaucher's imagery was vaguely representational; the shapes in prints like *Asagao* resemble flagstones, sometimes overlapping or, as in *Sgana*, 1962, floating freely across the white ground. He made these prints using multiple irregular plates so that the individual images become self-contained forms that rise above the surface of the paper. The absence of plate marks precludes interpreting the paper surface as anything other than itself.

Gaucher had initially enrolled at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal in 1954 to study painting. The prevailing model for avant-garde painting in Montreal in the mid-1950s remained Automatisme. But the style's commitment to gestural spontaneity made him uneasy because it allowed too much freedom. A painting, as he recalled, could change with a simple stroke of the brush. Printmaking, on the other hand, offered a much more logical stage-by-stage procedure, which "allowed [him] time to reflect and rectify decisions."[1]

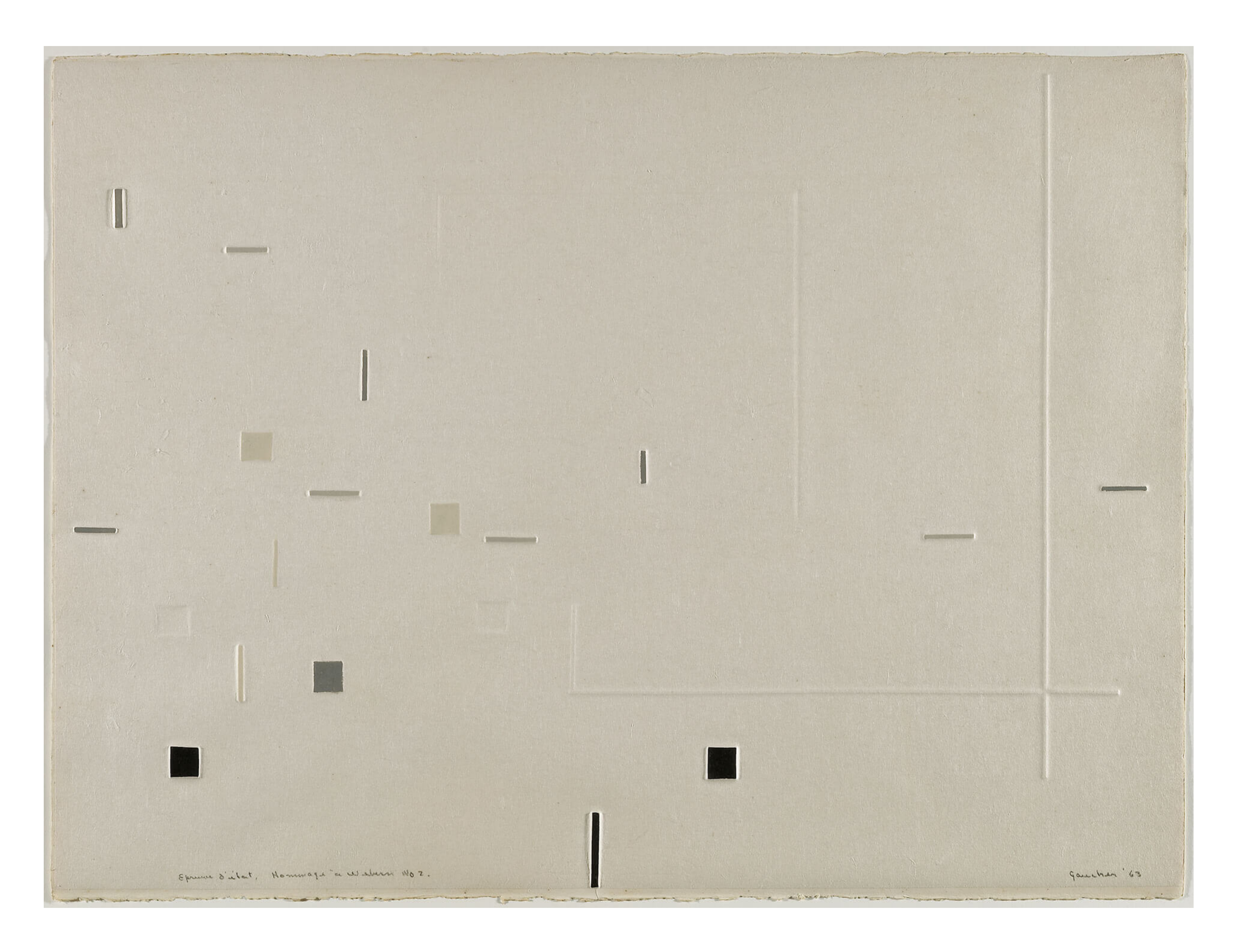
During late 1958 and early 1959, studying from a handbook of techniques he had bought, Gaucher began to experiment with Old Master etching techniques. He soon found traditional etching too limiting and started to experiment more broadly, increasingly altering or distressing his plates, often violently; he shifted to embossing, using a positive-negative combination of plates to achieve convex and concave reliefs. His prints from the early 1960s are remarkable for their technical innovations in relief printing, requiring paper of such weight and strength that he resorted to gluing together two pieces of Arches paper—the lamination, application of colour, and printing all done in the same process.



Yves Gaucher, *Sgana*, 1962, colour etching with embossing on laminated paper, 41.5 x 57.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

There is little in these early prints to hint at the geometry soon to come. But in *Sgana* Gaucher suddenly drops a short straight relief line down from near the top edge of the sheet, a disturbing geometric incursion into his otherwise quasi-organic world. Aligned with the lateral edges of the paper sheet, the line stands as a literal material measure of the print's rectangular format. In the next sequence of prints geometric structure increasingly dominates until, with his seminal suite In Homage to Webern, 1963, Gaucher adopts full-fledged geometry, staking out his place in the Montreal artists' group the Plasticiens.

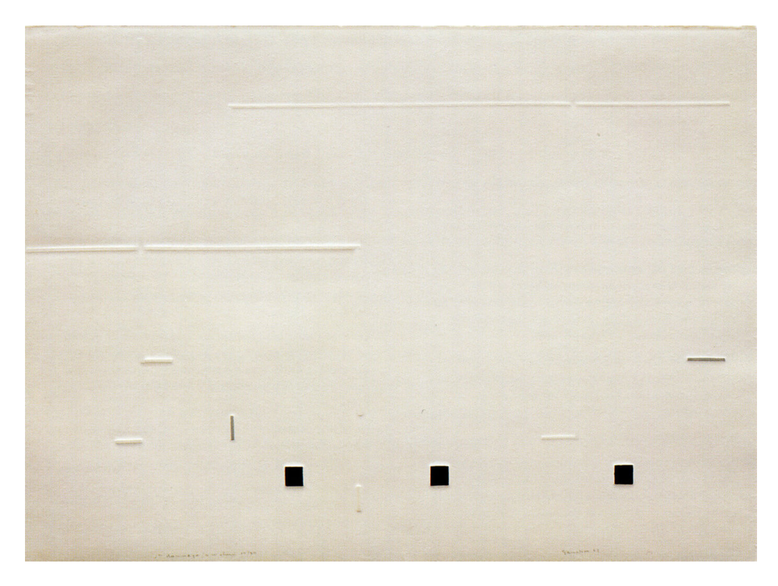
IN HOMAGE TO WEBERN NO. 2 1963



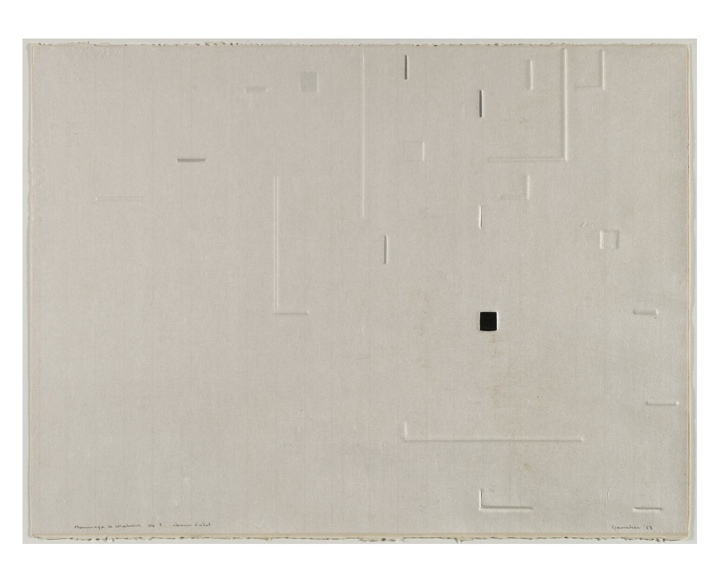
Yves Gaucher, *In Homage to Webern No. 2 (En hommage à Webern no. 2)*, 1963
Relief print in black and grey on laminated paper, 57 x 76.5 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

In Homage to Webern Nos. 1, 2, and *3*—a suite of three exactingly composed prints—constitutes a decisive break from Gaucher's earlier work and contains the seeds of subsequent developments. The prints were crucial to Gaucher's evolution into a Plasticien painter—or rather, to his birth as a post-Plasticien one—alongside Guido Molinari (1933–2004), Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), and Charles Gagnon (1934–2003).

Here he dispenses with the quasi-organic shapes seen in *Asagao*, 1961, transforming them into a system of pure notations: lines, squares, and dashes. Printed in positive or negative relief they are sometimes inkless, sometimes black and grey, loosely distributed but discernibly arranged according to a grid pattern. Gaucher would later call these visual cues "signals." He selects and disperses them in the three prints as if he were performing a set of variations on a theme, moving from a relatively even distribution toward increasing asymmetry.



Yves Gaucher, *In Homage to Webern No. 1 (En hommage à Webern nº 1)*, 1963, relief print in black and grey on laminated paper, 57 x 76.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

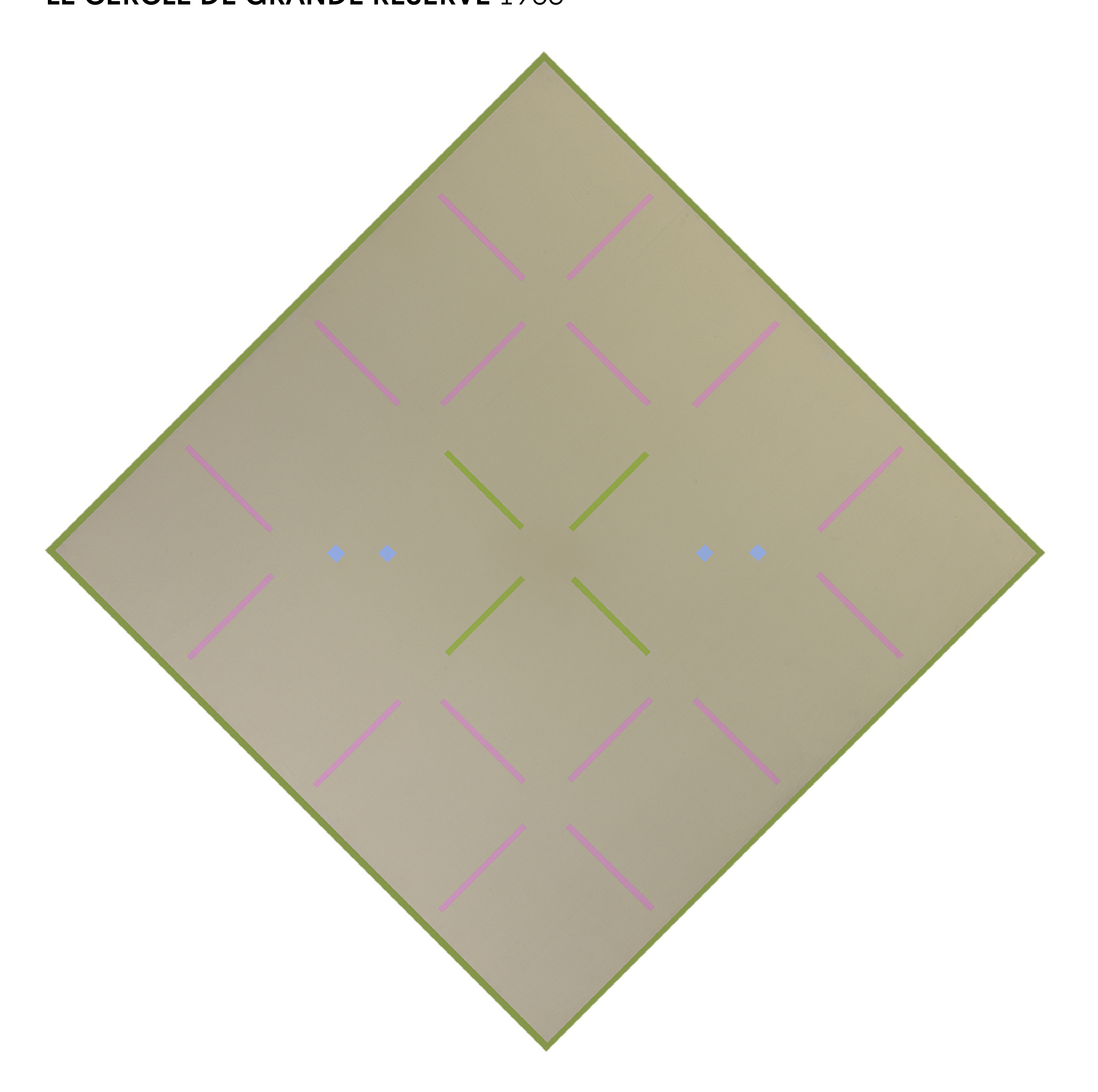


Yves Gaucher, *In Homage to Webern No. 3 (En hommage à Webern nº 3)*, 1963, relief print in black and grey on laminated paper, 57 x 76.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

A crucial event for the production of the Webern prints was a concert of music by Pierre Boulez, Edgard Varèse, and Anton Webern that Gaucher attended during his first visit to Paris in 1962. The exposure to these radical new forms of classical music provoked an intense period of work during which he made some 1,500 drawings, most of which he destroyed, until he arrived at the dynamic formal solution of the Webern prints.

Anton Webern's "cells of sound" found their visual equivalents in Gaucher's signals. Their geometric interrelations encourage us to try to assemble them into a single unity, but in reality the eye gets bounced about, allowed to take momentary refuge in a succession of smaller clusters of coherent relationships, each of which quickly dissolves as the eye moves onward, discovering new but equally fragile orderings. A search for wholeness and resolution instead yields a continual flux; Gaucher incorporates sensations of time and duration as essential qualities of the viewing experience.

LE CERCLE DE GRANDE RÉSERVE 1965

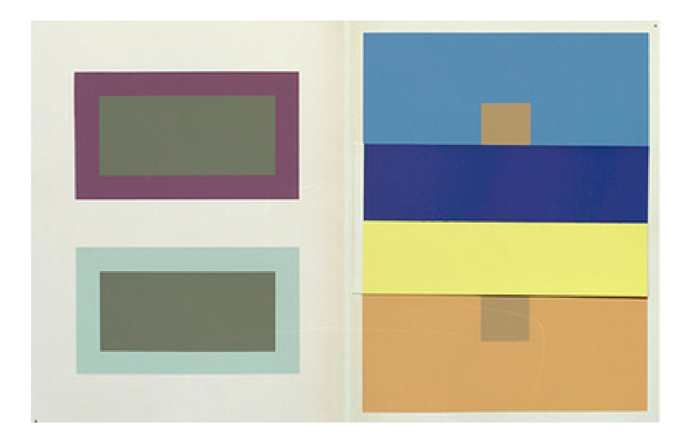


Yves Gaucher, *Le cercle de grande réserve*, 1965
Acrylic on canvas, 215.9 x 215.9 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

Le cercle de grande réserve is from Gaucher's kinetically rhythmic diamond-shaped Square Dances (Danses carrées) series of 1965, his first important paintings to emerge from the In Homage to Webern prints. The Square Dances paintings are square canvases turned 45 degrees, their colour fields energized by redeploying the vocabulary of "signals" he had invented for the Webern prints; here they usually appear as thin bars and small squares, distributed in regular patterns across the plane of the canvas. The colours themselves have been subtly adjusted to produce effects of rapid afterimage or other colour

interactions. The compositions may be symmetrical—on either one or both axes —but the kinetic colour activity sets the signals in rhythmic rapid motion as if they were echoing the steps and movements of the square dances that they are named after.

In 1963 Gaucher had read *Interaction of Color* by Josef Albers (1888–1976), as part of a systematic study of colour theory that also included the writings of the chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul (1786–1889) and the artists Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and Auguste Herbin (1882–1960). When he resumed painting in 1964 it was also with an enlarged perspective on the newest contemporary painting that he was encountering during regular visits to New York.

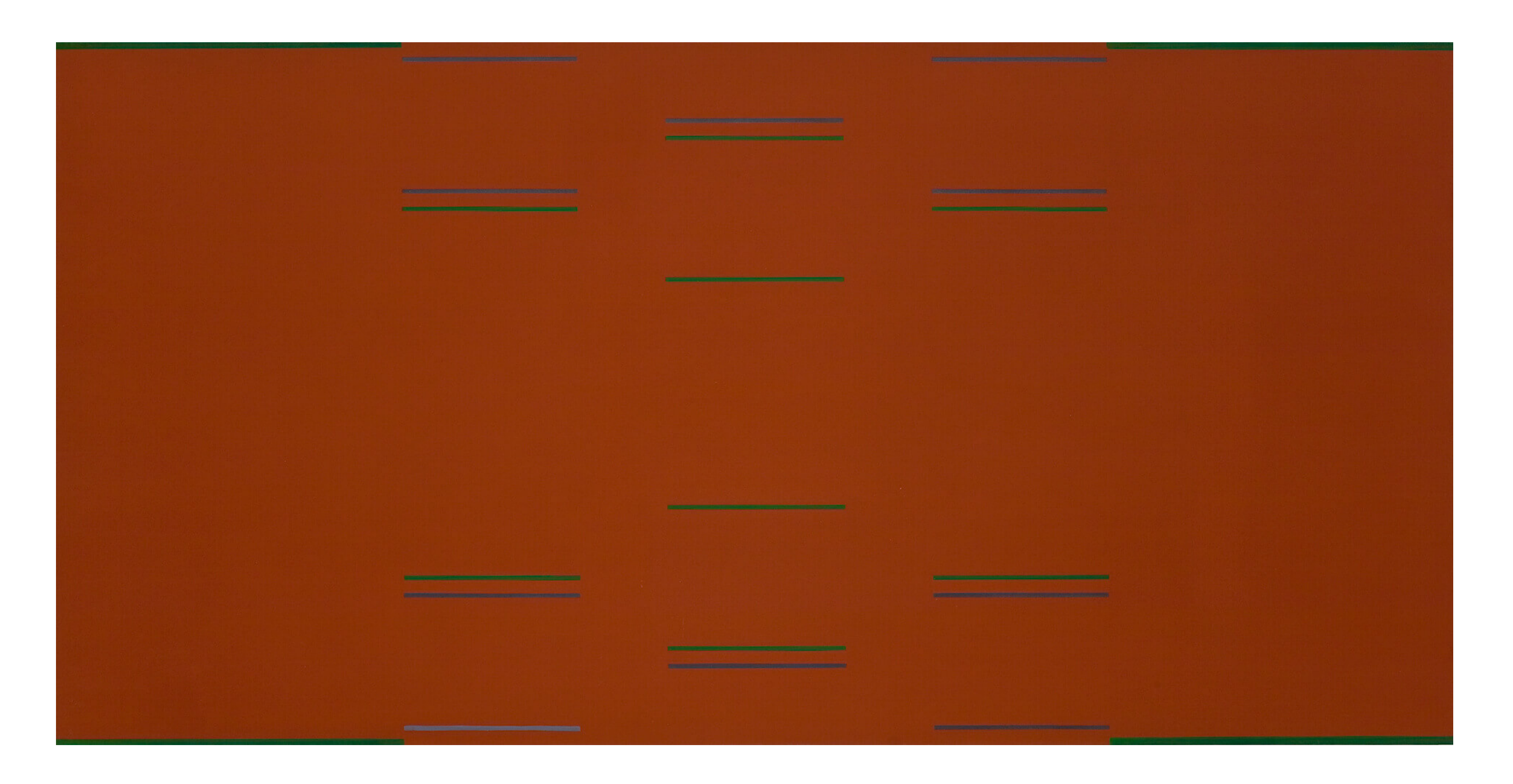




LEFT: Pages from *Interaction of Color* by Josef Albers (1963). RIGHT: Gaucher holding a paint roller in his studio on Saint-Paul Street East, Montreal, c. 1968–69.

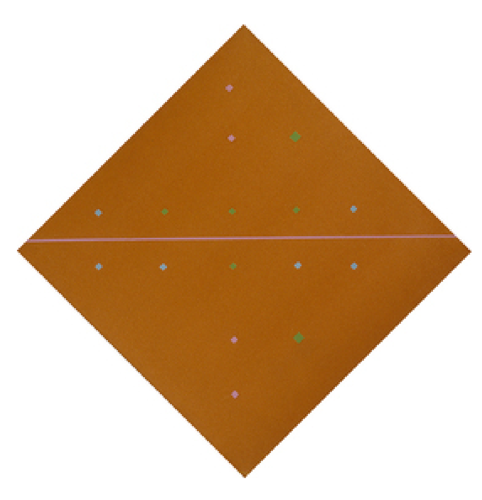
Gaucher had obviously looked closely at the Boogie Woogie paintings of Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), drawn to their visual pulsations and dance-like tempos, but he adopted an often idiosyncratic colour palette that paid no allegiance to the Neo-Plasticist primaries. Like his fellow Montrealers Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), Gaucher applied his paint with a roller, using masking tape to keep the edges straight and crisp. Optical effects necessitated hard edges, impersonal surfaces, and a certain order of symmetry. The Square Dances were the closest that Gaucher came to making optical art, and on their basis he participated, during the mid-1960s, in a number of Op art exhibitions across the United States.

DUSK, CALM, SIGNALS 1966



Yves Gaucher, *Dusk, Calm, Signals*, 1966
Acrylic on canvas, 101.5 x 203 cm
Galerie Simon Blais, Montreal, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

Dusk, Calm, Signals is from a group of paintings referred to as the Signals/Silences series, which invariably include one or both terms, denoting either high colour contrasts and emphatic rhythms or more subdued, contemplative colours. In 1966 Gaucher abandoned the diamond shape of the Square Dances series for the rectangle: the paintings in this group are entirely horizontal in orientation.



Yves Gaucher, *Square Dance: Bold Mauve I (Danse carrée: Gros mauve I)*, 1964, acrylic on canvas, 107 x 106.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

Gaucher's explicit use of the diagonal would go underground for the next decade, though implicit oblique vectors crossed and recrossed the paintings executed in between. As in the Square Dances series, the colour fields are framed along either or both of their horizontal and vertical edges, and the "signals" are stacked in precisely calculated intervals of different rhythmic dispositions and arranged symmetrically across both axes.

BLUE RAGA 1967



Yves Gaucher, *Blue Raga*, 1967
Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122 cm
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

The Raga paintings—their title reflecting Gaucher's passion for Indian music—continue the basic principles of the Signals/Silences series but are structured with a base line from which the "signal" lines rise as if in gentle ascent toward the top of the painting where there are no framing constraints. In *Blue Raga* the green and brown signals hover so tentatively over the deep and intense blue field that they seem hardly to touch it, like whispers of sound delicately improvised above the obbligato provided by the green band below.

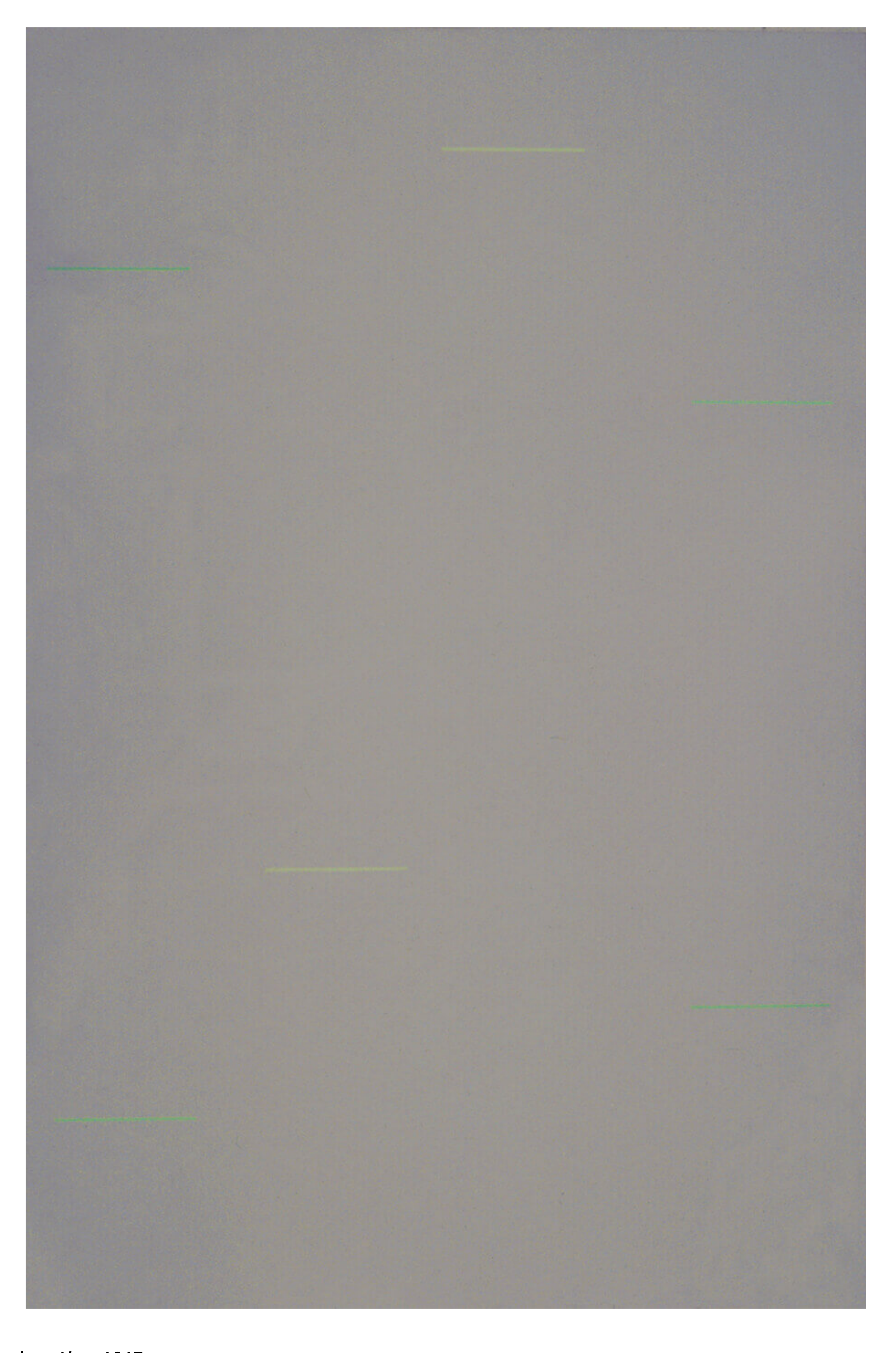
Starting with the Square Dances paintings, Gaucher developed a very personal palette, happily resorting—alongside many variations of red, yellow, and blue—to greens, pinks, beiges, browns, purples, and greys in unexpected juxtapositions and with startling consequences. In the Raga series, we find Gaucher moving in a direction different from his Montreal contemporaries Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), one that is based less in the "objectivity" of relations between colours, as Molinari puts it, and instead veering toward a subjective immersion in individual colours.



Album cover for *Morning and Evening Ragas* by Ali Akbar Khan, Gaucher's favourite musician.

The consequences are significant. The single colour grounds of the Ragas become their major theme. The overlying signals and bands are no longer the main event but serve to enhance and intensify the breadth and depth of each painting's hue. These paintings are slower. They unfold their rhythms more discreetly, and they introduce a mood of contemplativeness that will come to reign supreme in the long series of Grey on Grey paintings that Gaucher began in December 1967.

ALAP 1967



Yves Gaucher, *Alap*, 1967
Acrylic on canvas, 274.3 x 182.9 cm
Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

Alap is from Gaucher's Grey on Grey series. Over the course of two years, he executed some sixty Grey on Grey paintings, far exceeding the twelve he had initially projected. The narrow range of tonalities and almost transcendent mood created by the greys was particularly conducive to subtle variations.

Originally the series was to be titled Alap, referring to the opening of the classical raga, but he eventually substituted a letter-number formula, denoting the colours used and the date of execution. The paintings are all composed as uninflected roller-painted fields of grey across which are dispersed thin longer or shorter lines in white or grey tonalities that run strictly parallel to the upper and lower framing edges.

The series began in symmetry, like *Alap*, with its easily parsed structure of inverted, lateral symmetry. Even so, as in the In Homage to Webern prints, it is difficult if not impossible to fix the painting in one's vision as a stable configuration. Instead, the individual lines seem to cut free from their formal moorings, deflecting the eye from one to the next with speeds and in directions that seem entirely spontaneous.

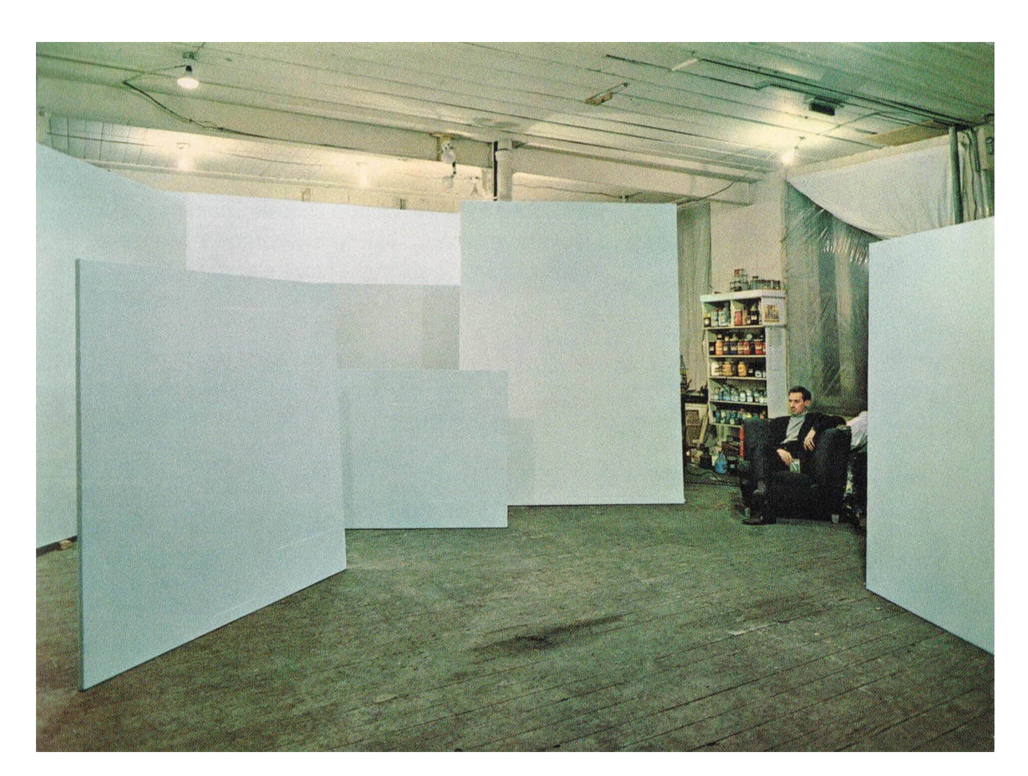


Yves Gaucher, *R-M-111 N/69*, 1969, acrylic on canvas, 304.5 x 203.5 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Yves Gaucher, *Untitled (JN-J1 68 G-1)*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 203.8 x 305.3 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

In subsequent paintings symmetry vanishes altogether; only Gaucher's well-practised intuition determines the exquisitely tuned details of line lengths, tonalities, and relative placements. Despite their limited means, the emotional range of the paintings is astonishing. Thus the broad horizontal stretch of *JN-J1 68 G-1*, 1968—articulated by only some six sparsely distributed line signals—is a majestically generous invitation to prolonged reverie. In contrast, *R-M-111 N/69*, which comes near the end of the series, is altogether brittle, quick, and edgy. Colour matters too insofar as the grey field of each painting is subtly tinted. This may register only subliminally but becomes apparent when the works can be compared side by side. (The paintings are titled by letter-number formulas that denote the colours with which their basic grey is inflected.)


Gaucher in his studio with the Grey on Grey series paintings.

Gaucher's first visit to Paris in the fall of 1962 had introduced him to the music of Anton Webern, a discovery pivotal to the evolution of his energized compositional structures. As important was the 1961 retrospective of the Abstract Expressionist Mark Rothko (1903–1970) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which he saw for a second time in Paris. Not only was he overwhelmed by the size of Rothko's paintings, but, as he later explains, they helped him to rethink how a painting ought to function in relation to its viewers: "It's not what you see … it's not what you analyze … but the state of trance that you can be put into by the work. The state of trance is yours … the work is the trigger, but it had to do with the spectator."[1] The Grey on Grey series fulfills these realizations.

Gaucher stopped the series at the end of 1969, having explored, as he explained, "the essential issues of the dialectic expressed in the Weberns of 1963." It was impossible to add to it in a significant way.[2] Seen as an ensemble, and as an environmental installation, as they were for the first time at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, England, in 1969, the Grey on Grey paintings add up to one of the grand achievements of postwar abstract painting. The British critic and curator Bryan Robertson describes them as "possibly the most beautiful and original—and awe-inspiring—paintings I've seen anywhere since the advent of Pollock and Rothko."[3]

TWO BLUES, TWO GREYS 1976

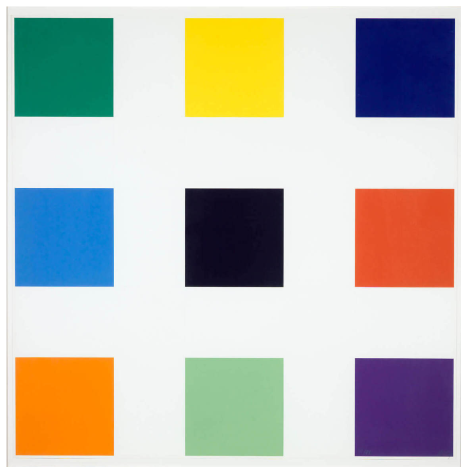


Yves Gaucher, *Two Blues, Two Greys*, 1976
Acrylic on canvas, 289.6 x 487.7 cm
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

Two Blues, Two Greys consolidates a new direction in Gaucher's painting. As indicated in its title it is composed of four horizontal bands of different colours, two of them blues and two greys, each differently weighed and measured. These are not four colours that work together easily; indeed, it is as if by heroic willpower that the painting comes together as a magnificent whole.

To extricate himself from the Grey on Grey series of 1967–69, Gaucher had to rethink the fundamentals of his painting, "blow it all up and think—pick up the pieces and examine them one by one, save what was worthwhile and throw away what wasn't anymore and start again."[1] The paintings that emerge by 1971 are composed of horizontal bands of different greys, overlaid with thin white lines that span the entire width of the painting. Step by step over the next several years the number of white lines diminish and then disappear. The pale greys are replaced by more self-assertive hues. *Two Blues, Two Greys*, in sheer scale and apparent simplicity of construction, is the masterpiece of this phase of Gaucher's work.

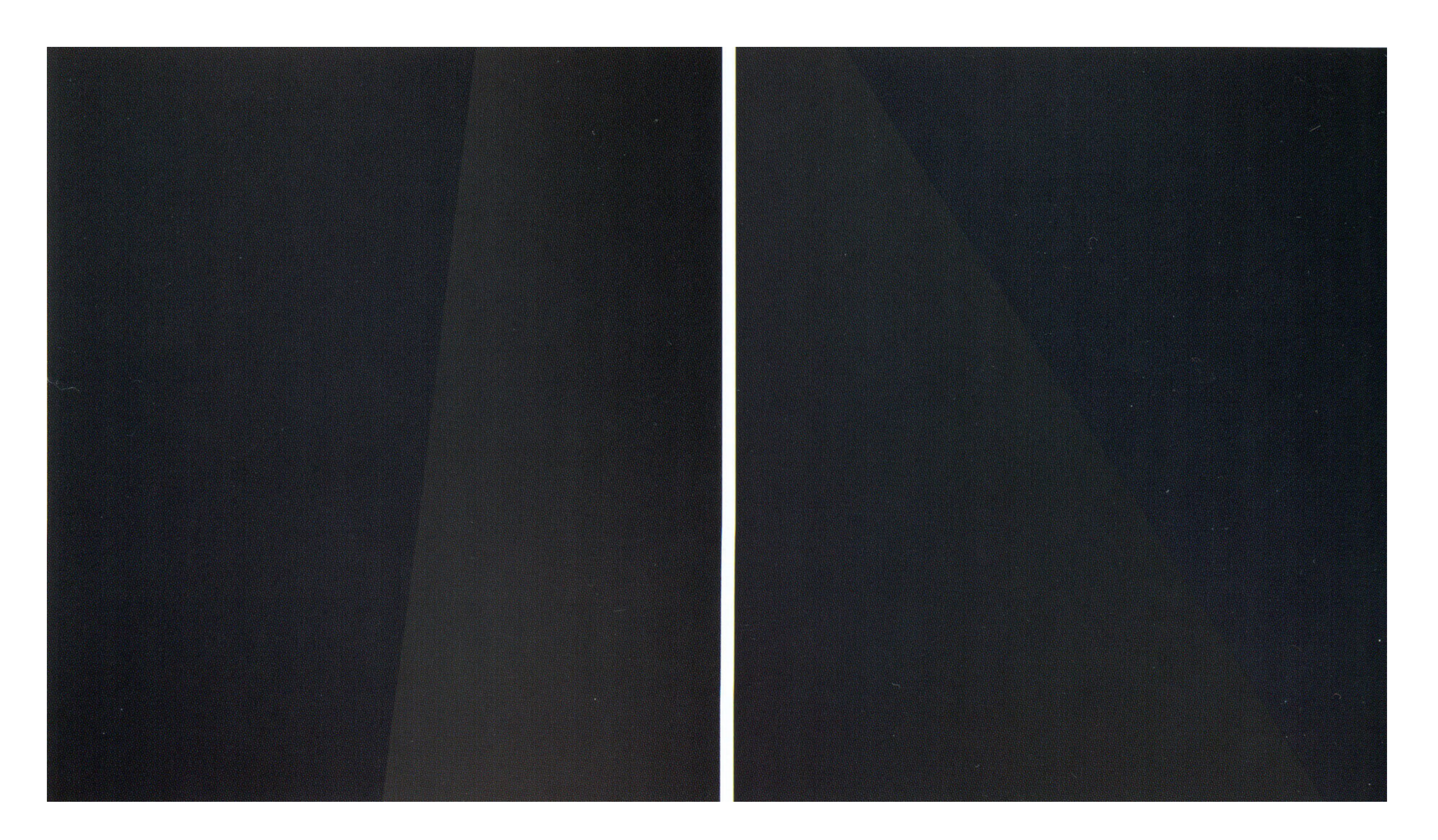
Gaucher's focus is no longer to orchestrate dispersed dynamic movement but to put in concert the tensions created by opposing vast planes of colour of unequal weights and measures. Gaucher composed paintings like this by performing a series of successive moves, juggling his shifting variables. An adjustment in the colour or hue of a single band called for readjustments in the other three, each move assessed and reassessed—he often tried out alternative solutions on paper or smaller canvases—until finally the painting was perfectly "tuned" and each band in concert with the whole.



Ellsworth Kelly, *Nine Squares*, 1976–77, screenprint and lithograph on paper, 103 x 103 cm, Tate Collection, London.

In paintings like *Two Blues, Two Greys*, Gaucher is interested not in the declaration of individual colours, but in how colours behave in dialogue. In this he differs from the American Ellsworth Kelly (b. 1923), whose work during this period is more concerned with the individuality of colours. If it is a question of abutted bands of colour, precise edges, and clean, uninflected surfaces, then Gaucher's closest colleague is fellow Montreal artist Guido Molinari (1933–2004), who had made colour-stripe painting his trademark in the early 1960s. But Molinari equalizes the width of his vertical bands, neutralizing form. By not equalizing the width of his bands, Gaucher retains form as a container for colour, keeping both container and contained in constant play.

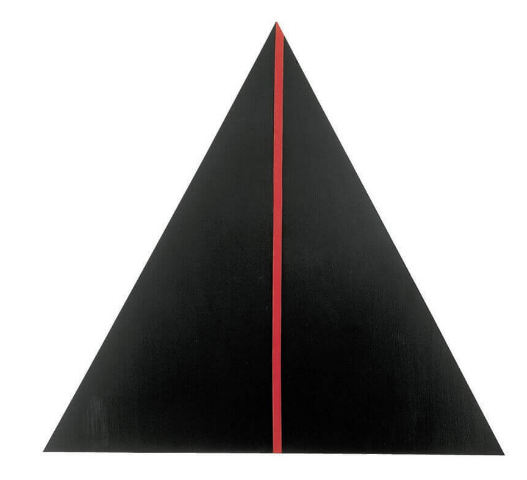
JERICHO 1 1978



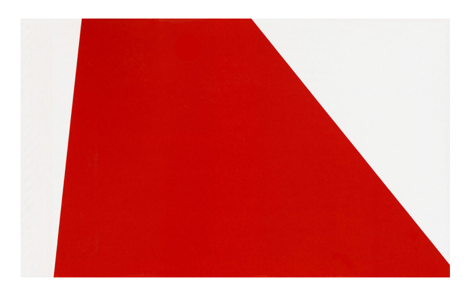
Yves Gaucher, *Jericho 1: An Allusion to Barnett Newman (Une allusion à Barnett Newman)*, 1978
Diptych, acrylic on canvas, each element: 320 x 280 cm
© Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

In the late 1970s Gaucher brought the diagonal back into compositional play, and did so on a grand scale in a series of single or diptych paintings titled *Jericho 1*, *2*, or *3*, all subtitled *An Allusion to Barnett Newman*. Barnett Newman (1905–1970) had played an important role for Gaucher as well as for Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), confirming for them the validity of their own respective experiments during the early 1960s with large-scale and simple fields of colour.

For his Jericho series Gaucher was influenced by Newman's *Jericho*, 1968–69, a painting in which Newman aimed to "break the format," taking on the challenge of the triangle "without getting trapped by its shape or by the perspective,"[1] according to the critic Thomas Hess. Newman's problem was in effect not dissimilar to the one Gaucher had posed for himself in paintings like *Two Blues, Two Greys*, 1976: to take on the challenge of horizontal



Barnett Newman, *Jericho*, 1968–69, acrylic on canvas, 268.5 x 286 cm, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, © The Barnett Newman Foundation, New York / SODRAC (2015).



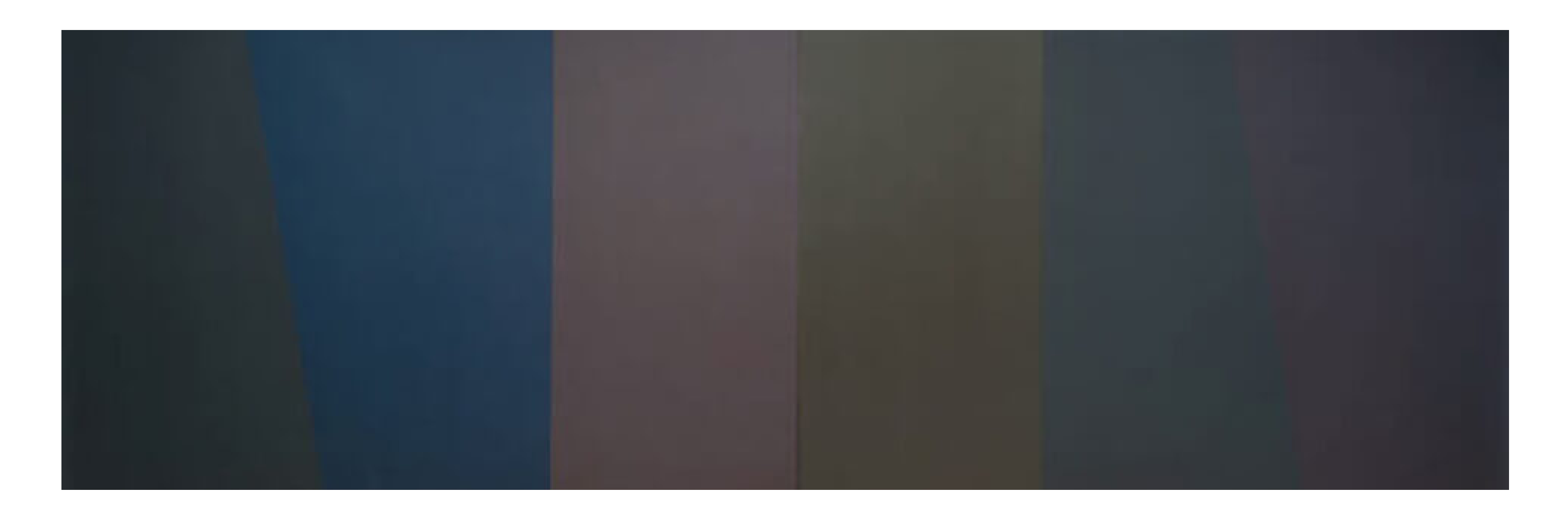
Yves Gaucher, *Er-Rcha*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 297.4 x 457.2 cm, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

bands of colour without letting the horizon line trap him into landscape painting. With *Jericho 1* the diagonal resurfaces, not at the edges but as a structural component within the fields of the paintings.

The Jericho paintings are structured on the theme of a vertically divided triangle, cut down the middle, creating in *Jericho 1* and *2* a diptych format. In both paintings the two canvases are separated just enough to establish the necessary dramatic tension that challenges the viewer's need to complete the triangle, not only across the two parts of the diptychs but also in its upward thrust beyond the canvases' top edges. Add to this the need to reconcile the equally powerful overall lateral tensions between and across the entire work's two internally and diagonally bisected rectangles. The sheer expanse of these two Jerichos, their minimal means, and their almost environmental scale can be measured only with the body's full kinesthetic response. Their colours are dark and contemplative.

Er-Rcha, the last painting of the Jericho series (its title is the Arabic name for Jericho), is proof of Gaucher's sureness of measure in both colour and structure. It is composed of a red irregular triangle, truncated above and on the right, constrained by the white planes that fill out the balance of the rectangular canvas. So extreme are the tensions on the edges of the canvas where the red and white planes meet, and the tension between those three planes, that the painting holds its rectangular shape only with the greatest difficulty.

T.D.S. 1988



Yves Gaucher, *T.D.S.*, 1988
Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 460 cm, each element: 180 x 230 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

At the beginning of the 1980s the figure of the triangle disappears from Gaucher's work, or, rather, it is reduced simply to diagonals. For a few years the paintings are square and subdivided obliquely into three or four vertical panels of unequal rhomboid-like shapes of different colours. Sometimes only a single strictly perpendicular vertical division stabilizes the composition. The individual shapes do not insist on their own definition but challenge the viewer's orientation by the unstable relations between them, how they lean and push and finally reconcile themselves with the painting's edges.

The paintings following *Er-Rcha*, 1978, the final work in his Jericho series, have deeper hues, presaging the dark values of the rich browns, deep magentas and khakis, and sombre blues of the so-called Dark Paintings, like *T.D.S.*, that follow. They are long and subdivided into many parts, mostly by perpendicular edges, but crucially energized by one or two often subtly articulated diagonals, the many disparities finally orchestrated into dynamic equilibrium on a monumental stage.

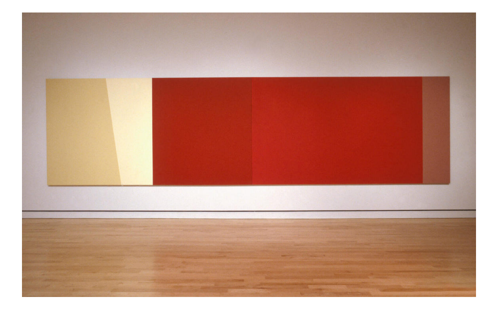
B2 + W PS 1989–90



Yves Gaucher, *B2 + w Ps*, 1989-90
Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 488 cm
Installation at Galerie René Blouin, Montreal

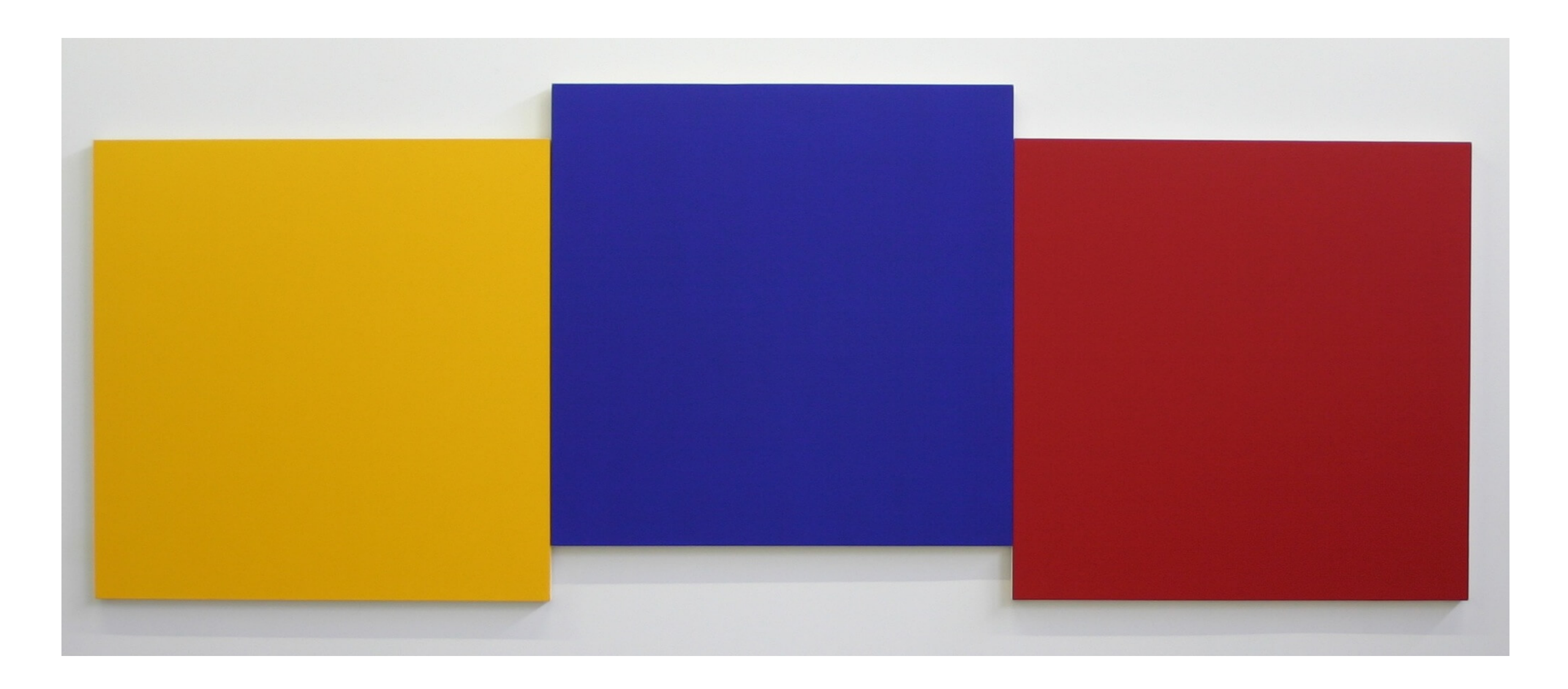
B2 + w Ps is one of Gaucher's Pale Paintings, a series that he began to produce around 1989–90 after completing the Dark Paintings. Gaucher's production process follows a certain pattern, each series or stage beginning with something like symmetry or some analyzable order, then edging toward increased asymmetry, and then with utter confidence testing the waters of near randomness.

After the relative seductiveness of the Dark Paintings, a Pale Painting like *B2 + w Ps*, created in 1989–90, sets out coolly to add up an impossible sequence of colours: a narrow band of greenish cream abuts a wide expanse of pale purplish blue that in turn bumps into an icy pistachio, which in a slight but dramatic diagonal meets a final conclusive white. The result appears to be on the one hand a hard-won struggle, and on other, an irrevocable harmony. It is also as if the space of the Pale Paintings emanates toward us, in what we can perhaps call an aura of light, to achieve an uninterrupted flow across precipitous edges and through discordant chromas and values, finally to attain gracefully, if paradoxically, an impossible reconciliation and repose.



Yves Gaucher, *Reds & Ps*, 1992, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 760 cm, installation at Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City.

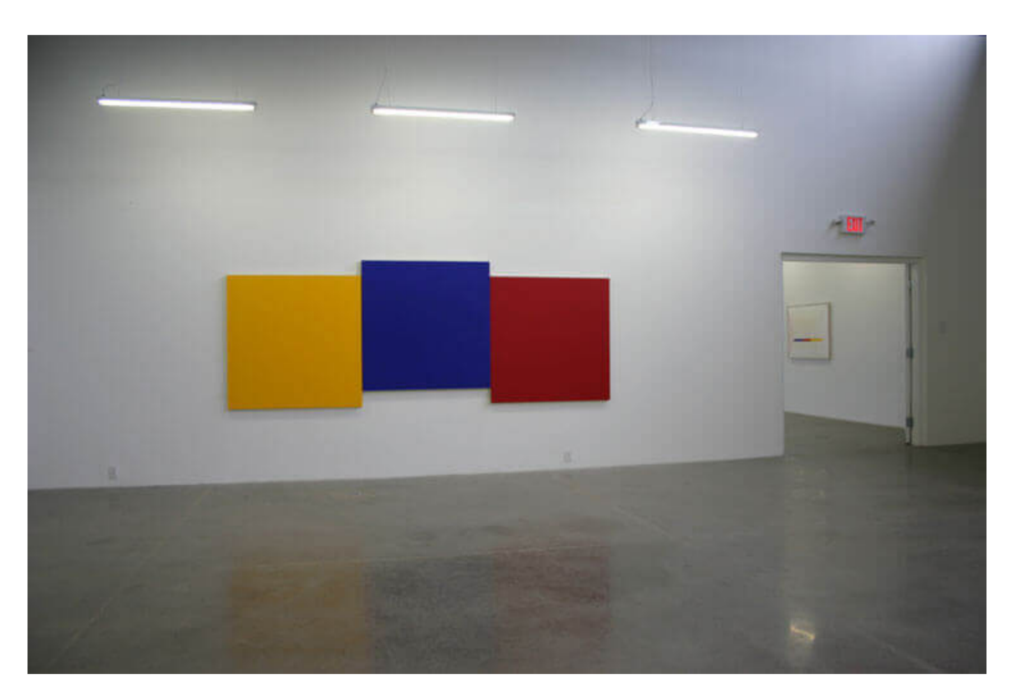
YELLOW, BLUE & RED IV 1999



Yves Gaucher, *Yellow, Blue & Red IV (Jaune, bleu & rouge IV)*, 1999
3 elements, acrylic on canvas, each element: 122.5 x 122.5 cm
© Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015)

Gaucher's last painting is a magisterial work, composed of three abutted and ascending monochrome panels of the primary colours, laconically entitled *Yellow, Blue & Red*. Once again something new seems to be taking place. True, *Yellow, Blue & Red* operates on lateral tensions and colour balances, but resolution is not so much an issue, as it is simply and generously given. Each monochrome panel succeeds in singing with its unique chromatic voice and at the same time stays in full harmony with its fellows.

Gaucher called it his last painting, but that may not be literally true. The three panels were probably executed in 1993 and were shown in his 1995 exhibition *Yves Gaucher: Recent Work*, at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery in Montreal, where they were hung in a straight line and slightly spaced. The panels then presumably went into storage to come out again for the exhibition *Peinture/Peinture* in Montreal in 1998. Here Gaucher installed the painting, now titled *Yellow, Blue & Red III*, with its three panels abutted but arranged in a pyramid format, the central blue panel raised some 24 centimetres.



Yves Gaucher, *Yellow, Blue & Red IV*, 1999, 3 elements, acrylic on canvas, 122.5 x 122.5 cm, installation at Arsenal Toronto, 2012. Photo: Arsenal Gallery.

When the work was exhibited again in 1999 in *Récurrences*, at the Musée du Québec (now the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), it appeared to be a new painting because Gaucher positioned the three panels in a staggered upward slope from left to right and dated it 1999. But Gaucher eventually, in his usual mischievous way, confessed that he had indeed used the existing panels but had rethought the painting and hung the panels in a new configuration. This version was the last painting in the 2003 posthumous exhibition at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

By this time the work had been signed and identified on the back: "Gaucher 98, Jaune, bleu et rouge IV." The numbers III and IV suggest that the painting could be, or had been, installed in as many configurations. The story behind Gaucher's decision to reuse and reconfigure the three monochrome panels was that a shoulder problem had inhibited him from continuing to paint on a large scale. During the last two years of his life Gaucher produced a rich body of works on paper using collage and lamination, and the primary colours of *Yellow, Blue & Red*.

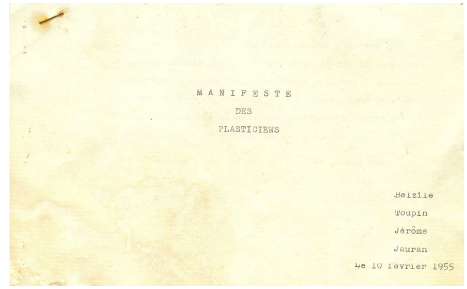


SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Gaucher’s work played a crucial role among the Plasticien painters, who in the 1960s made Montreal a centre for hard-edge and colour-field painting. Plasticien painting emerged at the same time as Post-Painterly Abstraction in Toronto and in the United States, and the two movements shared important stylistic characteristics. At the same time, Gaucher and his fellow Montrealers were fundamentally different, both in how they understood pictorial space and in the way they engaged with the viewer.

GAUCHER AND THE POST-PLASTICIENS

When Gaucher's painting came to maturity in the mid-1960s he was a relative latecomer to the Plasticien movement in Montreal. The Plasticiens, however, had an evolving history that is usefully divided into three phases. It is at the beginning of the last of these, during what might be called the post-Plasticien phase, that Gaucher enters the story.



MANIFESTE

DES

PLASTICIENS

Belzile

Toupin

Jérôme

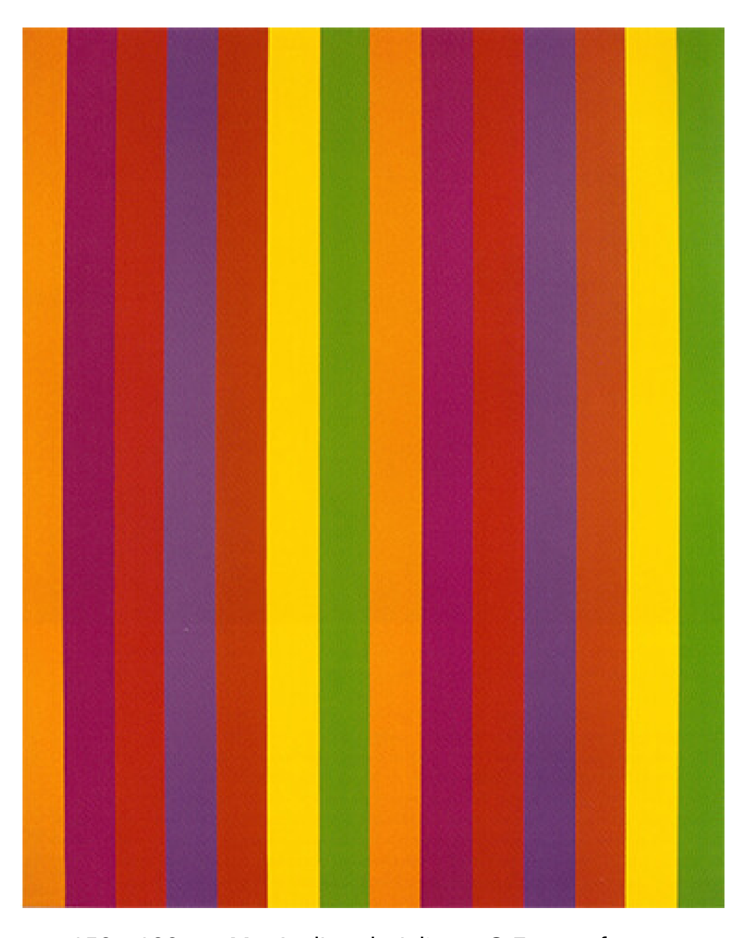
Jauran

Le 10 février 1955

Cover of the Plasticien manifesto.

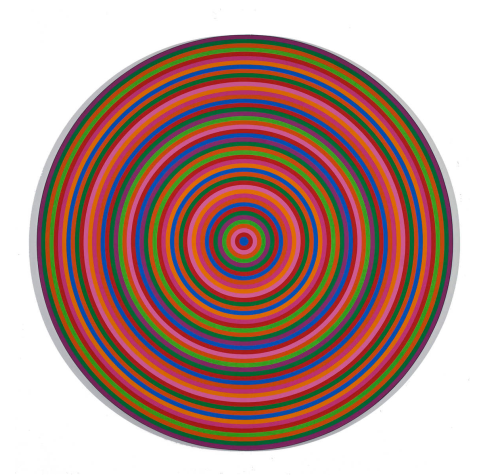
The Plasticien movement initially gained attention in 1955 when a group of young painters—Jauran (Rodolphe de Repentigny) (1928–1959), Louis Belzile (b. 1929), Jean-Paul Jérôme (1928–2004), and Fernand Toupin (1930–2009)—showed together and published their Plasticien manifesto. These four artists, the "first" Plasticiens, sought to rebuff the spontaneous techniques of their Automatiste predecessors, challenging the free brushwork and gestural style with a more impersonal geometry. In 1956, however, the so-called second Plasticiens, Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), accused the first Plasticiens of being timid, old-fashioned, and European in their outlook and challenged them with an even more severe, flatter, and larger-scaled geometric clarity.





LEFT: Guido Molinari, *Rhythmic Mutation Bi-Yellow*, 1965, acrylic on canvas, 152 x 122 cm, Musée d'art de Joliette, © Estate of Guido Molinari / SODRAC (2015). RIGHT: Guido Molinari, *Untitled*, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 198.1 x 160 cm, © Estate of Guido Molinari / SODRAC (2015).

The second Plasticiens grew to embrace other geometric painters, including some of the first Plasticiens. But their hard-edge geometry, as they practised it during the rest of the 1950s, also retained something of a retrospective European character. In the tradition of the work of Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), they built their paintings by balancing one structural part against another in pursuit of compositional balance and equilibrium. By the early 1960s, however, Molinari, with his Stripe Paintings, and Tousignant, with his targets, fully came into their own, evolving their work into the post-Plasticien phase. With such paintings they overthrew the formal compositional principles of the 1950s—the quest for intrinsic order and balance—to pursue new colour-based dynamic ways of actively engaging the viewer.



Claude Tousignant, *Chromatic Accelerator*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 243.8 cm (diam.), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

It is within the stylistic developments of the post-Plasticien phase as it evolved in the early 1960s that Gaucher's work must be understood. For personal reasons, Gaucher separated himself from Molinari and Tousignant. He entered the Montreal scene, fully born as a post-Plasticien, with his 1963 series of prints In Homage to Webern, followed two years later by his painting series Square Dances.

GAUCHER AND POST-PAINTERLY ABSTRACTION

Gaucher and his fellow Montreal post-Plasticiens emerged in parallel to Post-Painterly Abstraction, the latter a term coined by the American critic Clement Greenberg in the early 1960s to describe the new abstract painting by artists inspired by Henri Matisse (1869–1954), such as Morris Louis (1912–1962) and Kenneth Noland (1924–2010) in Washington, Jack Bush (1909–1977) in Toronto, and Kenneth Lochhead (1926–2006) in Regina. The artists of both movements were in practice "post-painterly"—that is, they rejected thick paint and personal gesture in favour of a thinner, more anonymous paint application.



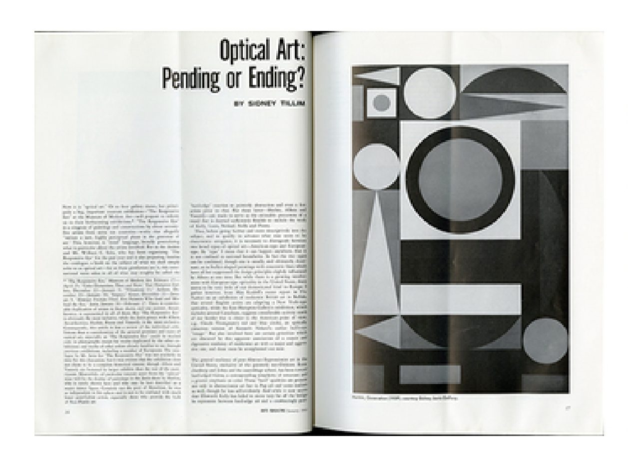


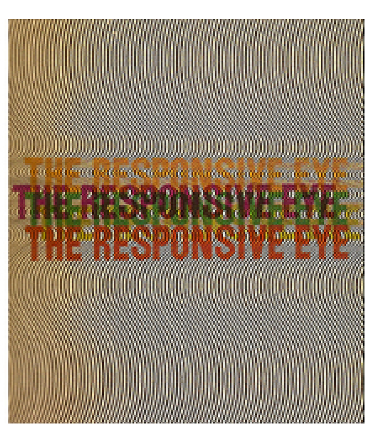
LEFT: Jack Bush, *Sea Deep*, 1965, oil on canvas, 223.4 x 145 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, © Estate of Jack Bush / SODRAC (2015). RIGHT: Kenneth Noland, *C*, 1964, acrylic on canvas, 177.2 x 177.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, © Kenneth Noland / SODRAC (2015).

Post-Painterly Abstract painters so thinned their paint that they stained it into the weave of their raw canvases, letting colours bleed and leaving edges soft. The Montrealers, in contrast, applied their colour planes with a roller onto primed canvases, keeping their edges straight, crisp, and hard. The aesthetic criteria that Greenberg applied when selecting the artists for his 1964 exhibition *Post Painterly Abstraction*, which opened in Los Angeles and closed in Toronto, in effect excluded the work of the Montreal painters.

Even so, the Montreal post-Plasticiens had already found their independent voices by the time that hard-edge and colour-field painting in general became the subject of international, if largely New York–based, debates. These inevitably centred around the critical issues proposed by Greenberg's 1964 exhibition and William Seitz's 1965 optical art exhibition *The Responsive Eye*, at the Museum of Modern Art.

In anticipation of *The Responsive Eye*, the New York critic Sidney Tillim, in the January 1965 issue of *Arts Magazine*, attempted to discern some order within all the new hard-edge painting, dividing it into two categories: European-type and American-type painting.[1] The first, along with most optical art, he judged old-fashioned because it was too dependent on prewar Cubism. The future for Tillim instead lay with American-type painting, which, with its background in Abstract Expressionism, had opened its compositions into expansive, flattened planes of colour fields.

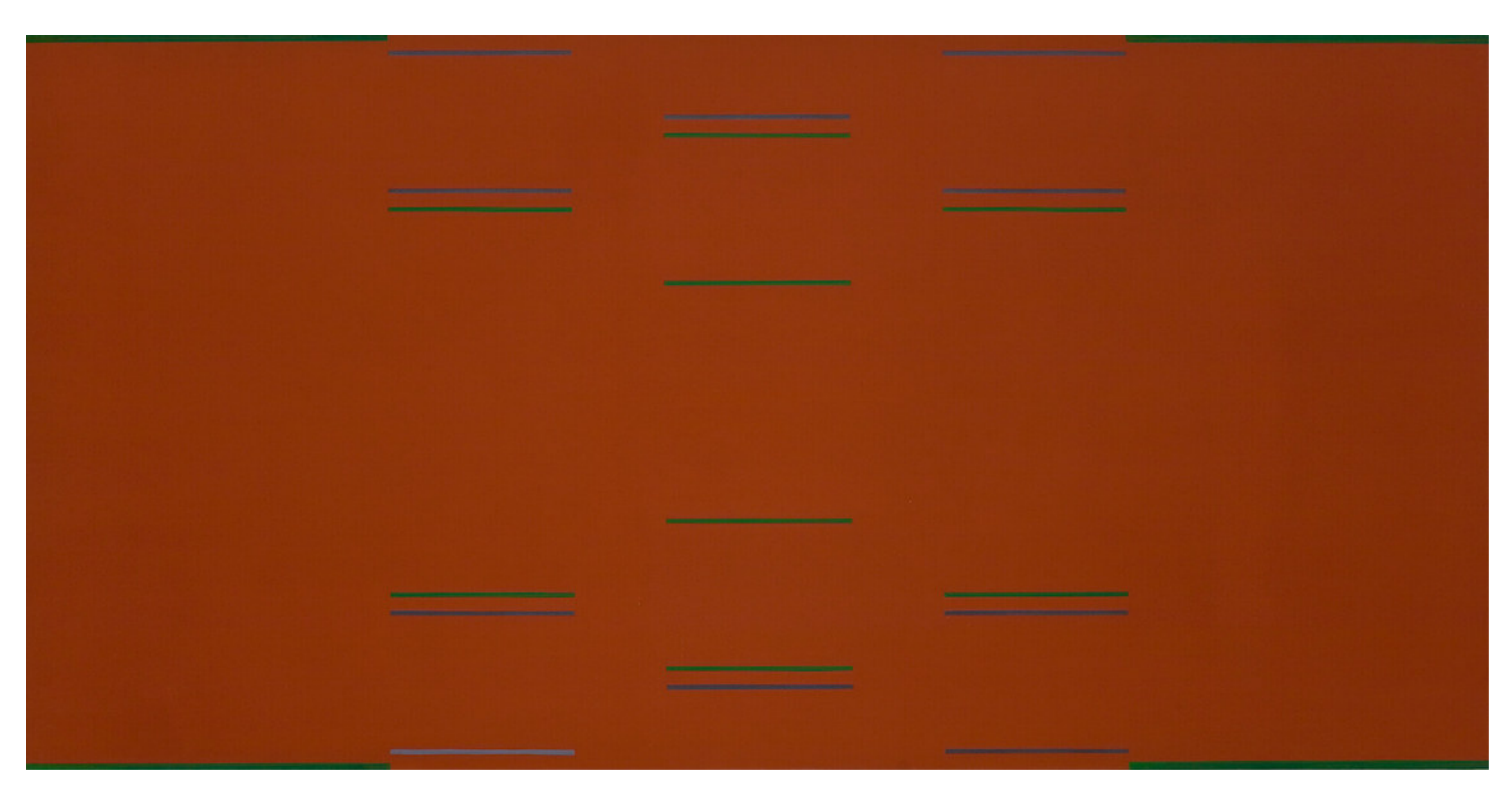

Optical Art:
Pending or Ending?
BY SIDNEY TILLIM



LEFT: "Optical Art: Pending or Ending?" by Sidney Tillim, in *Arts Magazine*, January 1965. RIGHT: Catalogue for *The Responsive Eye*, a 1965 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In early 1965 Gaucher—unlike Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), who had already had significant exhibitions in New York—had not sufficiently advanced his painting to be part of Tillim's discussion. But in the wake of *The Responsive Eye*, Gaucher, along with Molinari and Tousignant, almost immediately became a regular participant in Op art shows across the United States, so that Tillim's critical European-American distinctions could apply with equal aptness—or ineptness—to all three Montreal artists.

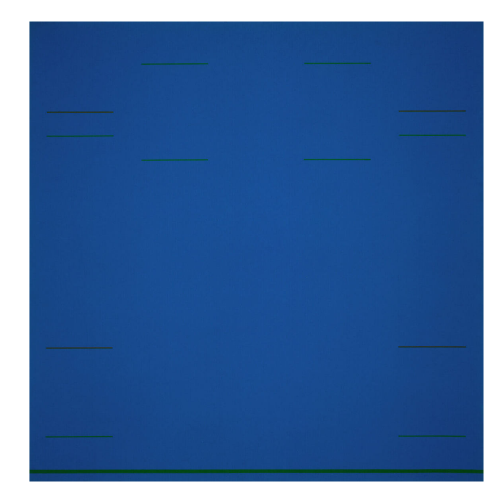
Where the Montrealers fit into his schema eluded Tillim and most New York critics, whose artistic taste largely followed Greenberg's. The Canadians painted on an American scale, and they privileged pure unmodulated colour, as in Gaucher's *Dusk, Calm, Signals*, 1966. But their edges were hard in a European way, razor-edged compared with the softer new American edges that let the colour fields they defined breathe with Matissian ease. The Canadians in contrast pulled their colour planes taut and abutted them tightly so that it was not their individual character as much as their interrelatedness that registered, and how their colours seemed to mutate under the roving eye.



Yves Gaucher, *Dusk, Calm, Signals*, 1966, acrylic on canvas, 101.5 x 203 cm, Galerie Simon Blais, Montreal, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

In brief, if in New York the new "hard edge" was about the aesthetics of colour, in Montreal it was about colour's dynamics. In this respect it is interesting to record that while Gaucher had his second solo exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York in September 1966, it would also be his last—Martha Jackson by then deciding that his work was straying too far from current trends in New York.[2]

It was the stylistic rigour of the Montrealers that led Sidney Tillim and other American critics to dismiss them as mechanical, purged of subjectivity, and essentially bereft of sensual pleasure. The Montrealers themselves rejected being called optical artists, understanding their own ambitions in much larger terms, their colour dynamics a tool for immersing their viewers in the constant flux of human experience. Their art, they argued, could explore the world more profoundly than traditional painting because it was capable of embodying the structures that underlie daily existence.



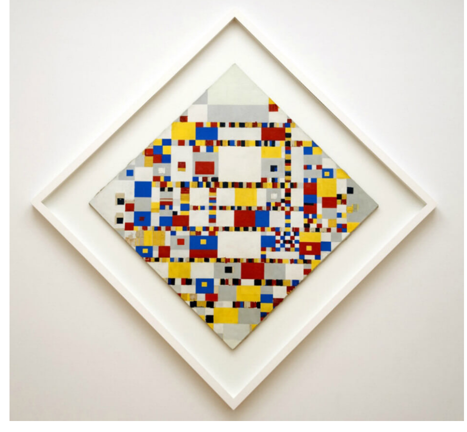
Yves Gaucher, *Blue Raga*, 1967, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122 cm, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

The Montreal post-Plasticiens thus constructed their paintings as fields of energy that operate according to the objective reality of the laws of colour and perception, their activity like a concentrated metaphor for the rhythms of real life. Thus the tautly constructed colour interactions and rhythmic movements of a painting like Gaucher's *Blue Raga*, 1967, seek to focus in the viewer a specific set of responses, moments of intensified consciousness of such existential qualities of life as otherwise get trifled away by quotidian distractions.

But if Guido Molinari and Claude Tousignant undertook their painting largely from a secularly grounded world, Yves Gaucher added something else to the mix of Montreal hard-edge styles: not technically per se, but in his reach for a spiritual realm of experience, a quality he first consummately attained in his Grey on Grey paintings, which he began in 1967.

GAUCHER AS A NORTH AMERICAN ARTIST

Gaucher, like his fellow Montreal artists, and as much as any Post-Painterly Abstract painter, unabashedly saw himself in the forefront of modernist developments. But for historical and geographical reasons all the Montrealers drew for themselves a line of modernist descent that in a crucial way differed from that of the New Yorkers.



Piet Mondrian, *Victory Boogie Woogie*, 1942–44, oil and paper on canvas, 127 x 127 cm, Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

Gaucher's story, of course, included Mark Rothko (1903–1970) and Barnett Newman (1905–1970), but it equally embraced Josef Albers (1888–1976) and Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), especially the New York Mondrian of the Boogie Woogie paintings. During Gaucher's first visit to Paris in 1962, when he saw contemporary American painters like Rothko, Jasper Johns (b. 1930), and Morris Louis (1912–1962) in a European context, Gaucher fully came to understand that Paris was no longer a fountainhead for advanced art. Although French-speaking, Gaucher was a French-speaking North American. And if he and his fellow Montrealers were not American-type painters within the strictures of New York taste, they were, seen from a European perspective, recognizably North American painters.



STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Gaucher produced highly ordered, geometrical, and flat images that pushed the boundaries of Canadian painting to explore and question the experience of colour and time. The hard-edge painting technique is a necessary component to the experience of Gaucher's paintings as events in time. Music was a fundamental influence on his development, and he often used musical titles to suggest analogies to the rhythmic movements of his compositions.

PRINTMAKING

In the early 1960s Gaucher was known as a printmaker, having quickly established himself as a prize-winning participant in international exhibitions. His prints of the late 1950s and early 1960s are remarkable for their technical innovations, demonstrating extensive experimentation with relief and lamination. Like the paint-heavy small works by Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932) from 1954–55, Gaucher's prints share a delight in material physicality.



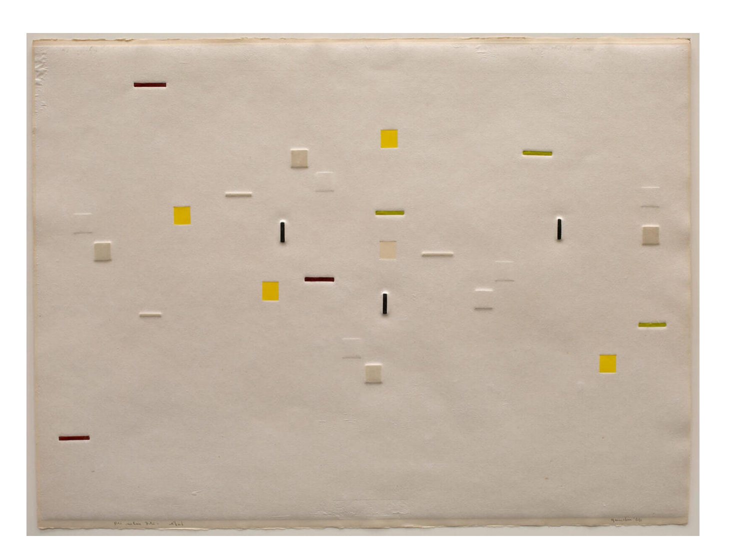
Gaucher working on a serigraph in his studio on Roslyn Avenue, Montreal, c. 1959.

In *Sgana*, 1962, Gaucher inserted a single straight line, and then other rectangular subdivisions. Soon he had adopted a full-fledged geometry, staking out a place in the Plasticien ambience with his seminal suite of prints In Homage to Webern, 1963, and the other relief prints related to it, until by 1964 and 1965, he made painting his principal focus.

These prints were crucial to Gaucher's evolution into a Plasticien painter, or rather, to his birth as a post-Plasticien one. They dispense with quasi-biomorphic shapes, turning to a system of pure notations: lines, squares, and dashes, sometimes inkless, sometimes black and grey, eventually introducing colours in *Yellow Fugue (Fugue jaune)*, 1963, and *Fold upon Fold (Pli selon pli)*, 1964. Gaucher would later call them "signals," which bounce the eye from one point of focus to another. The prints look rigorously structured but are free and spontaneous, their formal order at odds with the vivacity of their effect.



Yves Gaucher, *Sgana*, 1962, colour etching with embossing on laminated paper, 41.5 x 57.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

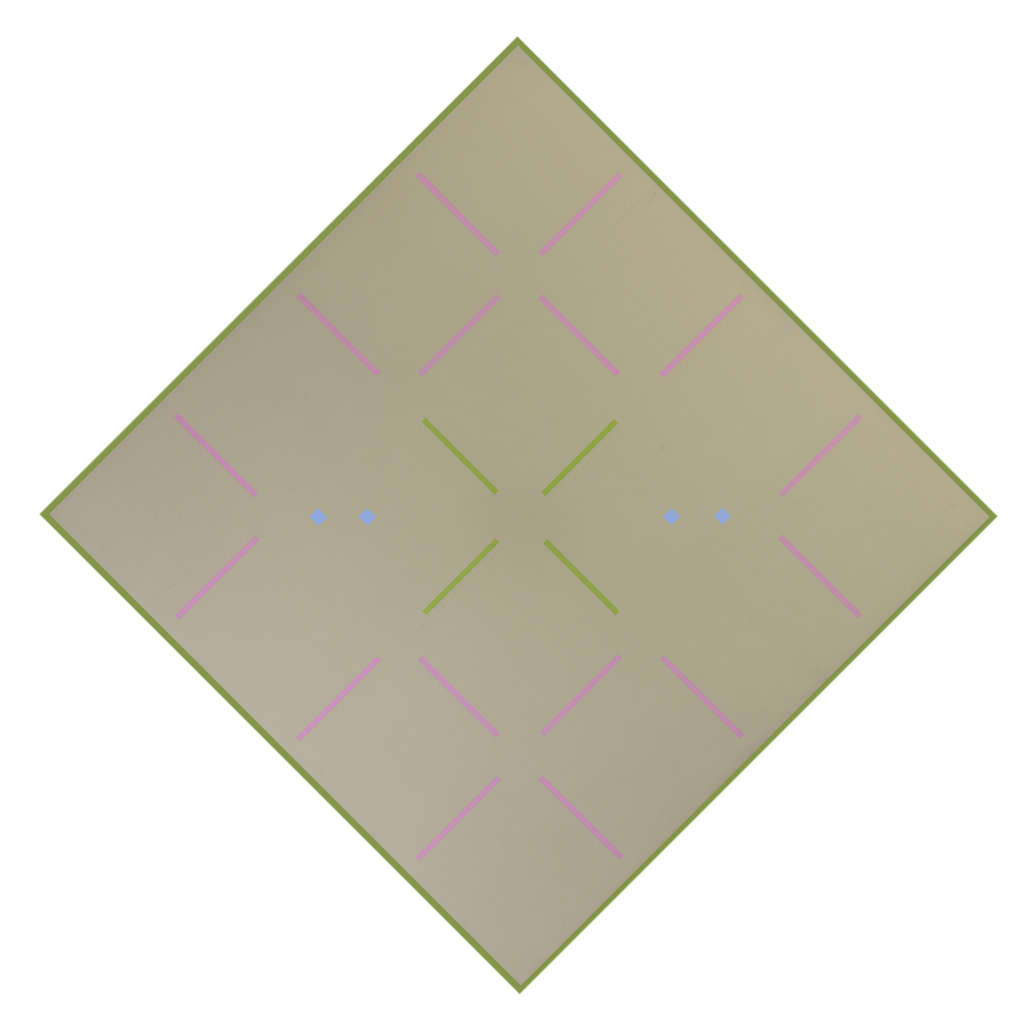


Yves Gaucher, *Fold upon Fold (Pli selon pli)*, 1964, colour relief print on laminated paper, 56.8 x 75.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

HARD-EDGE PAINTING

Like his fellow Montreal artists Guido Molinari (1933–2004) and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932), Gaucher applied his paint with a roller on primed canvases, using masking tape to keep the edges straight and crisp. The point was to shut out traditional illusionism entirely, allowing not even the slightest implication of space behind the painting's surface, even that shallow poetic space opened up by the soft edges of the staining techniques of Post-Painterly Abstraction.

In the mid-1960s Gaucher concluded that a painting could no longer be a window onto, or a picture into, another imaginary world. Instead it should exist more like a literal object in this world, whose surface was articulated with a number of colours organized geometrically as in the Square Dances series. These colours were carefully calibrated so that they would interact optically in the eye of the viewer, and their geometric relations let them play a rhythmic dance across the painting's surface. The visual activity would occur then, not in some space inside the painting, but in front of it, in an animated space that simultaneously embraces the painting and the viewer who sets it in motion.



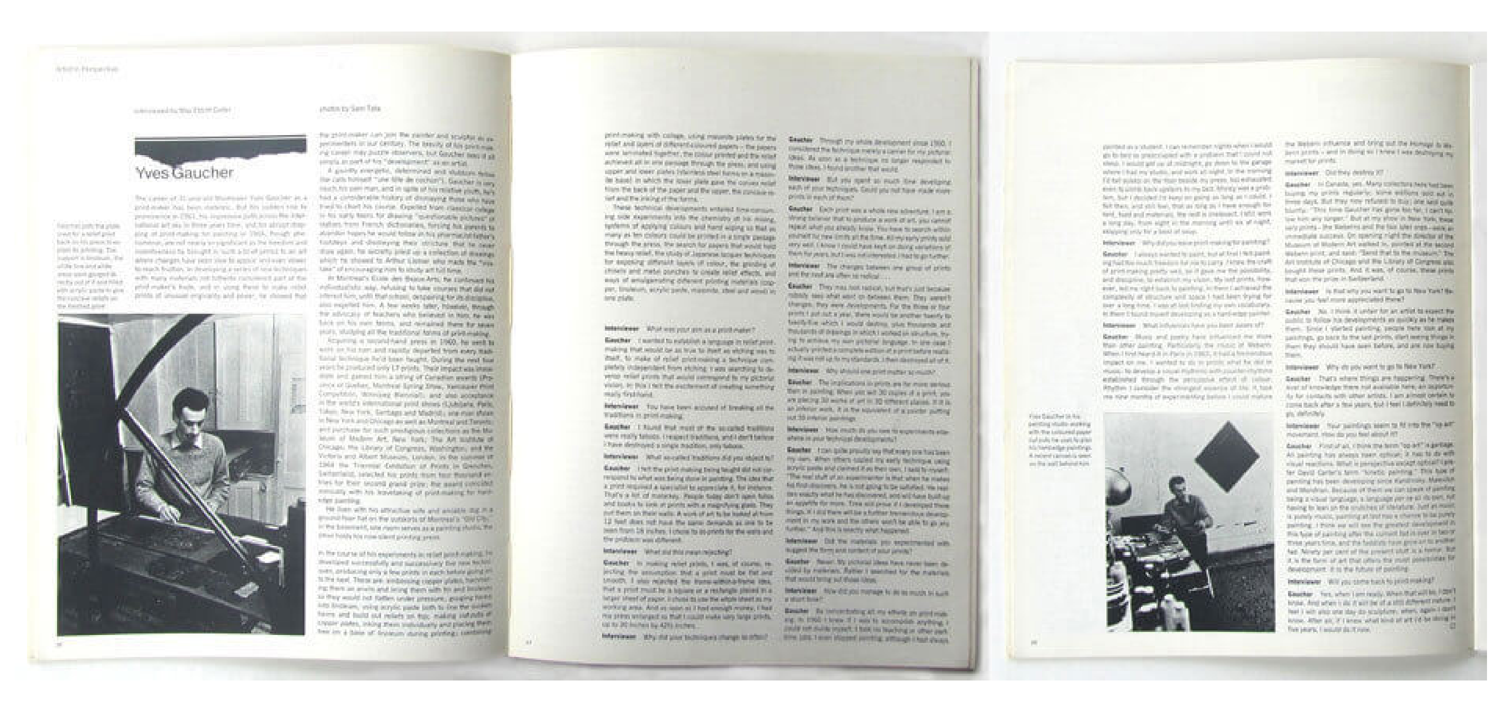
Yves Gaucher, *Le cercle de grande réserve*, 1965, acrylic on canvas, 215.9 x 215.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

To establish such a space necessitated hard edges, impersonal surfaces, and a certain order and symmetry. Equally important, because our viewing experience of a Gaucher painting is never static, is never resolved, but is always caught up in a recurring series of rhythmic movements, the painting ceases to be a fixed thing, our experience with it more like participating in an event in time.

Gaucher's hard-edge technique is key to our experience of the paintings as events in time. Music was a fundamental influence on his development, and he often used musical titles (Fugue, Square Dance, Raga) to suggest analogies to the rhythmic movements of his compositions.

GAUCHER AND TIME

Time as a condition of looking at a painting was a critical issue in the mid-1960s. In his still remarkable 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood," Michael Fried requires modernist painting—meaning Post-Painterly Abstraction—to preserve a condition that he calls "presentness." He argues that you can "experience the work in all its depth and fullness" in a brief moment, since all that you need to know is in front of your eyes.[1] In contrast, Fried describes the experience of Minimalist art as occurring within a limitless flow of time.

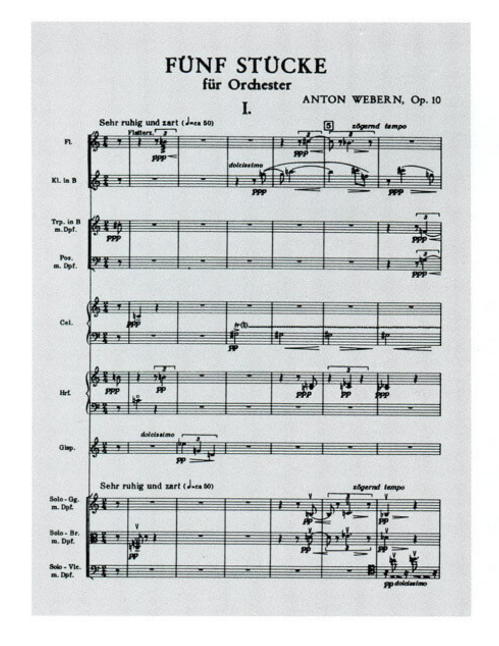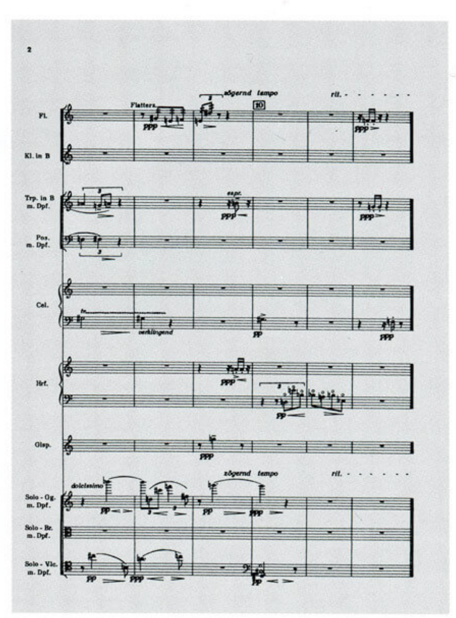


"Artist in Perspective: Yves Gaucher Interviewed" appeared in *Canadian Art* magazine in 1965.

The same admonition would, by extension, apply to painting like Gaucher's that, at least in the 1960s, changes under our eyes and has no fixed moment of resolution. Asked by *Canadian Art* magazine in 1965 to explain his work, Gaucher produced a text whose gist would have been familiar to his fellow post-Plasticiens. Where Guido Molinari (1933–2004) explained his work with reference to the American philosopher Alfred Korzybski's "principle of non-identity" and Claude Tousignant (b. 1932) spoke of "non-determination," Gaucher declared his paintings to be about the "relations of indetermination."[2]

GAUCHER AND MUSIC

Music had a deep influence on Gaucher. In an interview from 1996, he recalled, "It was only in music that I came to understand what a profound aesthetic experience really was. I heard concerts that marked me, that opened my ears and eyes. A very strong sensorial experience. Then in my work, I sought to recreate this experience which made me forget time, space, physicality."[3] Throughout his life he retained a deep commitment to jazz, Indian music, and contemporary classical music.

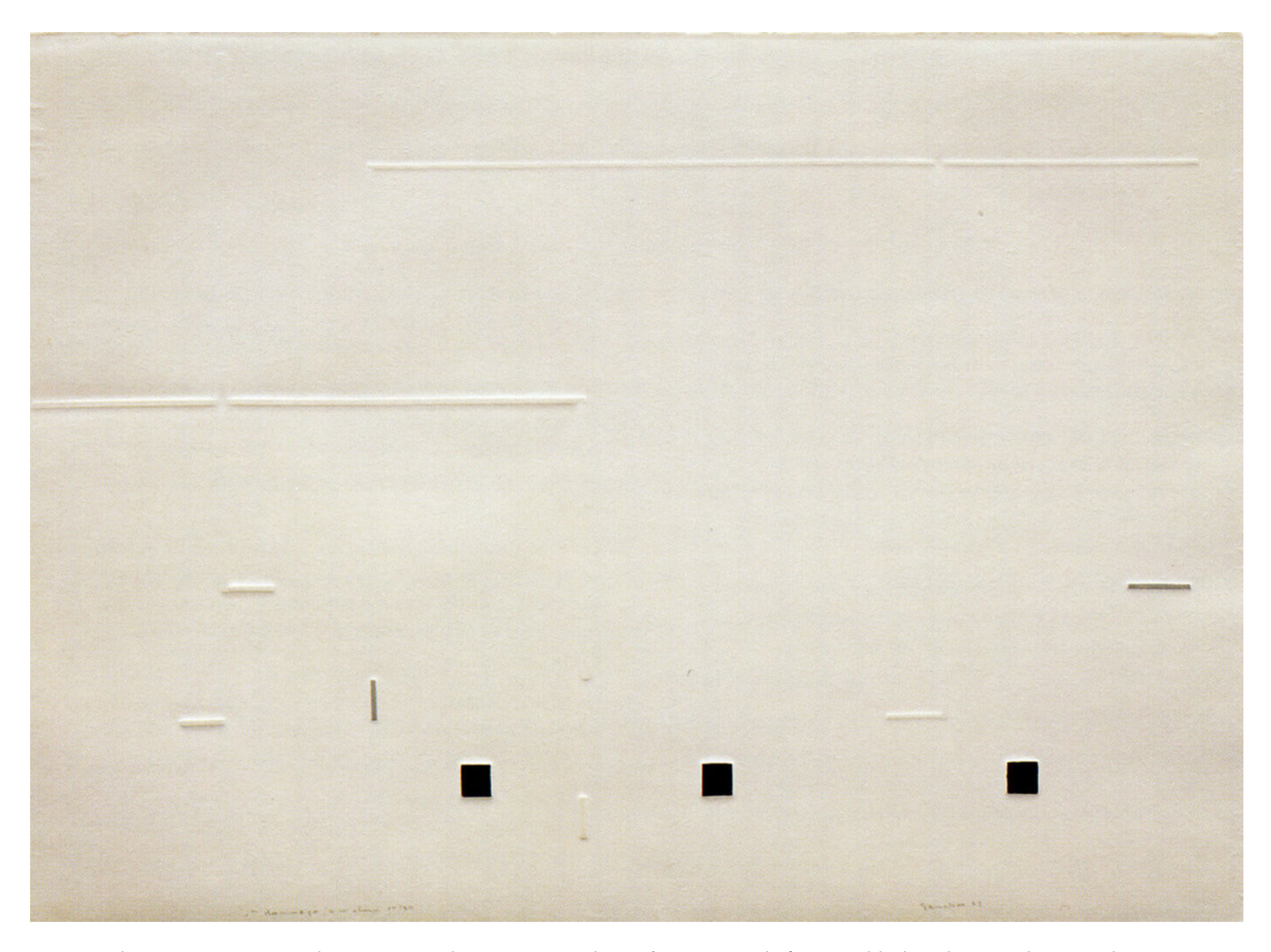




Musical score for Anton Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 10, first movement.

His musical indebtedness is reflected in his works' titles: the In Homage to Webern prints, 1963; *Fold upon Fold*, 1964, borrowed from a 1957 Pierre Boulez composition; *Blue Raga* and *Alap* from the mid-1960s, taken from Indian music; *Silences*, 1966; and *Transitions*, 1967. He described rhythm, in the context of both life and art, as the basis of aesthetic experience.

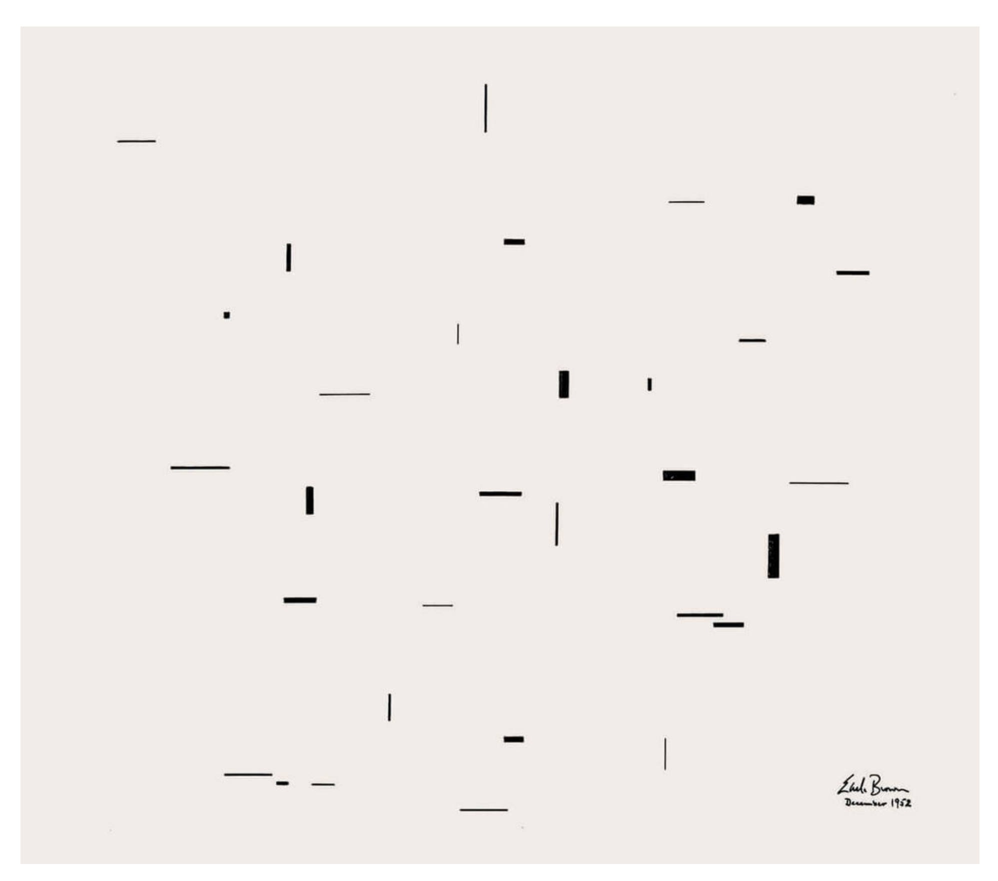
This is subject matter most richly discussed in relation to the In Homage to Webern prints, whose conception dated back to a concert of music by Pierre Boulez, Edgard Varèse, and Anton Webern that Gaucher attended during his first visit to Paris in 1962. It was Webern's music that most profoundly disturbed him and challenged the basic preconceptions that heretofore had driven his artistic expression. As he recalled: "The music seemed to send little cells of sound into space, where they expanded and took on a whole new quality and dimension of their own."[4]



Yves Gaucher, *In Homage to Webern No. 1 (En hommage à Webern n° 1)*, 1963, relief print in black and grey on laminated paper, 57 x 76.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

The experience provoked a crisis and an intense period of work. For a long time he experimented with drawings until he arrived at the dynamic formal solution of the Webern prints in which the composer's "cells of sound" found their visual equivalents in the "signals," the system of pure notations of lines, squares, and dashes that he disperses across his paper sheets. It is not that Gaucher is illustrating music that he had heard, and the title of his prints do not reference any specific work of the composer. It is rather as if in his mind's eye Gaucher had envisaged visual equivalents for Webern's aural sensations as they dispersed themselves in the space of hearing.

Also of note are the close visual analogies between Gaucher's prints and the graphic score for "December 1952," by the American composer Earle Brown. Brown invented and used various innovative musical notations: his score for "December 1952" is made up entirely of points and horizontal and vertical dashes of different shapes and sizes, separated in space and spread out over the page. It is not known whether Gaucher was familiar with Brown's score, but he would have been aware of the general influence of the avant-garde composer John Cage, out of which Brown's work had grown.



Graphic score for Earle Brown's "December 1952".

Brown's score shares the Webern prints' non-centred dispersal of their symbols in such a way, as the musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez describes it, that it "invites the performer to play the different elements in random succession and therefore escape from the linear constraints of a 'normal' score."[5] In an analogous way Gaucher's viewer randomly enters the open compositions of the Webern prints at will and manoeuvres through their structures along non-prescribed routes, in effect improvising as he goes.

Gaucher had also begun to listen to Indian music sometime around the beginning of the 1960s, in conjunction with reading Indian philosophy. He described the Indian raga as another of the strongest musical experiences he had experienced, valuing it for its constructive discipline. In the concerts of Ali Akbar Khan, his favourite performer, however, the results became "free and creative," until listening intensified into an "ecstatic experience."



Yves Gaucher, *Untitled (JN-J1 68 G-1)*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 203.8 x 305.3 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery, © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Gaucher in his studio on De Bullion Street, Montreal, 1979.

Gaucher, nevertheless, despite his passion for music, became cautionary when people started to describe him as “a musical painter.” He had originally used musical titles because, as he said, “I felt they were more abstract, and it backfired.” By 1967, therefore, he largely abandoned titles, substituting letter and number combinations, such as *JN-J1 68 G-1*, 1968, that would be meaningless except to himself, for whom they served as codes to identify the colours he had used in each painting, for reference, in case of future repair work.

In 1968, as a guest artist, he joined the graduate program in electronic music at McGill University, intrigued by, among other things, the electronic equipment that could read drawings and translate them into music, and vice versa. But he found the exercises finally meaningless, reinforcing his dictum that “true art should be a purely visual language, just as music is a purely auditive [*sic*] language…. Art must speak only to the eyes, and to nothing else, to reach the soul.”[6]

WHERE TO SEE

The Art Gallery of Ontario, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, and the National Gallery of Canada hold the largest number of works by Yves Gaucher, but important works can be found in most major public institutions across Canada, as well as in private collections. Although the works listed below are held by the following institutions, they may not always be on view.

ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA

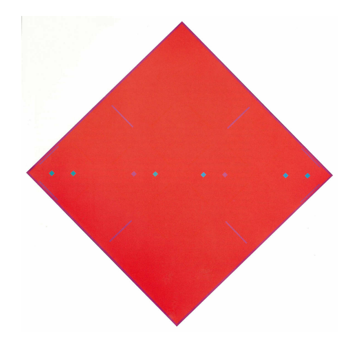
2 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
780-422-6223
youraga.ca



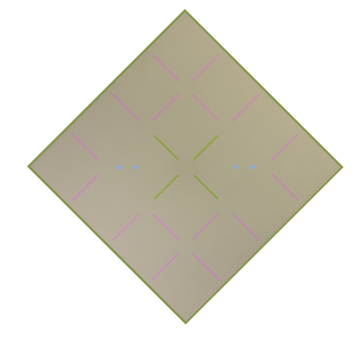
Yves Gaucher, *Alap*, 1967
Acrylic on canvas
274.3 x 182.9 cm

ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648
ago.net



Yves Gaucher, *Square Dance: Bold Mauve I (Danse carrée: Gros mauve I)*, 1964
Acrylic on canvas
107 x 106.2 cm



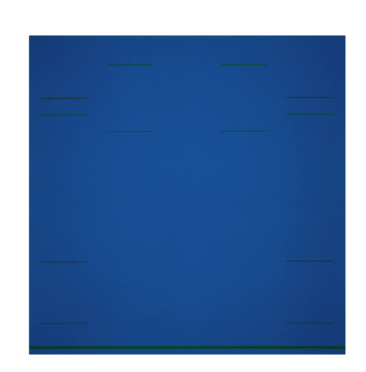
Yves Gaucher, *Le cercle de grande réserve*, 1965
Acrylic on canvas
215.9 x 215.9 cm

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

185 Ste-Catherine Street West
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
514-847-6226
macm.org



Yves Gaucher, *Asagao*, 1961
Etching and embossed copper printed on laminated papers
48.4 x 33.4 cm



Yves Gaucher, *Blue Raga*, 1967
Acrylic on canvas
122 x 122 cm

MUSÉE NATIONAL DES BEAUX-ARTS DU QUÉBEC

National Battlefields Park
Quebec City, Quebec, Canada
1-866-220-2150 or 418-642-2150
mnbaq.org



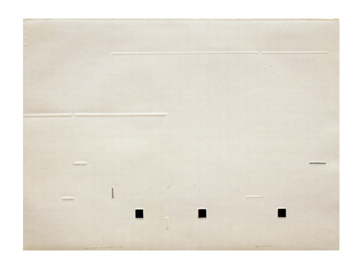
Yves Gaucher, *R-M-111 N/69*, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
304.5 x 203.5 cm

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

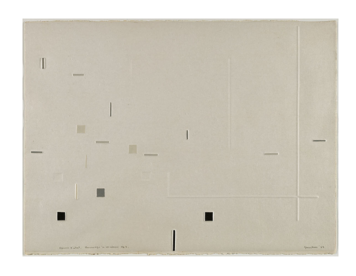
380 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
613-990-1985
gallery.ca



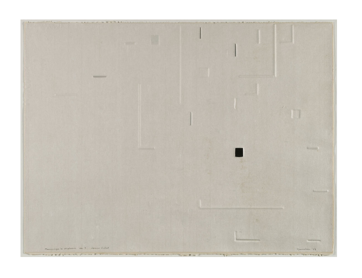
Yves Gaucher, *Sgana*, 1962
Colour etching with embossing on laminated paper
41.5 x 57.3 cm



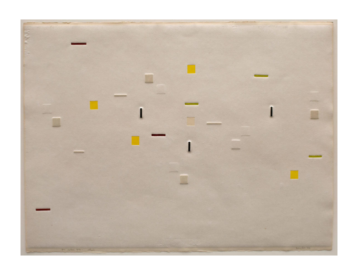
Yves Gaucher, *In Homage to Webern No. 1 (En hommage à Webern no. 1)*, 1963
Relief print in black and grey on laminated paper
57 x 76.5 cm



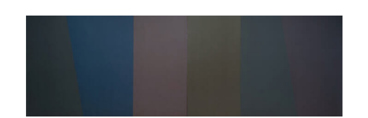
Yves Gaucher, *In Homage to Webern No. 2 (En hommage à Webern no. 2)*, 1963
Relief print in black and grey on laminated paper
57 x 76.5 cm



Yves Gaucher, *In Homage to Webern No. 3 (En hommage à Webern no. 3)*, 1963
Relief print in black and grey on laminated paper
57 x 76.5 cm



Yves Gaucher, *Fold upon Fold (Pli selon pli)*, 1964
Colour relief on laminated paper
56.8 x 75.5 cm



Yves Gaucher, *T.D.S.*, 1988
Acrylic on canvas
180 x 460 cm; each element: 180 x 230 cm

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 Hornby Street
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
604-662-4700
vanartgallery.bc.ca



Yves Gaucher, *Untitled (JN-J1 68 G-1)*, 1968
Acrylic on canvas
203.8 x 305.3 cm

NOTES

BIOGRAPHY

1. Yves Gaucher, videotaped interview with Chris Youngs, 1974 (unpublished). Other biographical information is drawn from the author's many meetings and discussions with the artist between 1975 and 2000. See also Roald Nasgaard, *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979) and Martine Perrault, "Chronology," in *Yves Gaucher* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2004).

2. Yves Gaucher, videotaped interview with Chris Youngs, 1974 (unpublished).

3. Françoise de Repentigny, "La relève de qui? De quoi?" *Le Devoir*, February 13, 1960.

4. Bryan Robertson, "Eminence Grise at Edinburgh," *The Spectator*, August 23, 1968.

KEY WORKS: ASAGAO

1. Yves Gaucher, taped interview with Virgil Hammock, November 18, 1973 (unpublished).

KEY WORKS: ALAP

1. Yves Gaucher, videotaped interview with Chris Youngs, 1974 (unpublished), quotation transcribed in Roald Nasgaard, *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario), 41.

2. Roald Nasgaard, *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario), 83.

3. Bryan Robertson, "Eminence Grise at Edinburgh," *The Spectator*, August 23, 1968.

KEY WORKS: TWO BLUES, TWO GREYS

1. Yves Gaucher, videotaped interview with Chris Youngs, 1974 (unpublished).

KEY WORKS: JERICHO 1

1. Thomas Hess, *Barnett Newman* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 136.

SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Sidney Tillim, "Optical Art: Pending or Ending?," *Arts Magazine*, January 1965, 16–23.

2. Martine Perrault, "Chronology," in *Yves Gaucher* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2004), 236.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum*, June 1967; reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art* (New York: Dutton, 1968), 116–47.

2. Roald Nasgaard, *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979), 47.

3. Yves Gaucher, from an interview with Jean-Jacques Nattiez, quoted by Gaston Roberge in *Autour de Yves Gaucher* (Quebec: Loup de Gouttière, 1996), 84–85. Translated in Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Webern/Gaucher: The Jolt," in *Yves Gaucher* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2004), 193–209.

4. Cited in Roald Nasgaard,*Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979), 20. On Gaucher and music, see Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Webern/Gaucher: The Jolt," in *Yves Gaucher* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2004), 193–209.

5. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Webern/Gaucher: The Jolt," in Sandra Grant Marchand, Roger Bellemare, Danielle Blouin, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, and David Tomas, *Yves Gaucher* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2004), 198.

6. Yves Gaucher, videotaped interview with Chris Youngs, 1974 (unpublished).

GLOSSARY

Abstract Expressionism
A style that flourished in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, defined by its combination of formal abstraction and self-conscious expression. The term describes a wide variety of work; among the most famous Abstract Expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Willem de Kooning.

afterimage
A term that refers to an optical illusion whereby an image remains visible even after its source is no longer present. An example of a common afterimage is the glow that appears in one's vision following exposure to a bright light.

Albers, Josef (German/American, 1888–1976)
A painter and designer who studied and later taught at the Bauhaus, Albers immigrated to the United States after the Nazis closed the school in 1933. As a teacher at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, he attracted future luminaries such as Robert Motherwell and Willem de Kooning. Albers was a pioneer of Op art and Kinetic art.

Automatistes
A Montreal-based artists' group interested in Surrealism and the Surrealist technique of automatism. Centred on the artist, teacher, and theorist Paul-Émile Borduas, the Automatistes exhibited regularly between 1946 and 1954, making Montreal a locus of mid-century avant-garde art. Members included Marcel Barbeau, Marcelle Ferron, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Fernand Leduc, and Françoise Sullivan.

Belzile, Louis (Canadian, b. 1929)
Born in Rimouski, Belzile trained as a painter in Toronto and Paris in the 1940s and 1950s. On returning to Quebec he became a founding member of the Plasticiens in 1955, working geometrically. Later he practised a more lyrical form of abstract art in contrast to that championed by the group.

Borduas, Paul-Émile (Canadian, 1905–1960)
The leader of the avant-garde Automatistes and one of Canada's most important modern artists. Borduas was also an influential advocate for reform in Quebec, calling for liberation from religious and narrow nationalist values in the 1948 manifesto *Refus global*. (See *Paul-Émile Borduas: Life & Work* by François-Marc Gagnon.)

Braque, Georges (French, 1882–1963)
A seminal figure in the history of modern art. Working alongside Picasso from 1908 to 14, Braque developed the principles of major phases of Analytic and Synthetic Cubism and, along with the latter, the use of collage. After the First World War he pursued a personal style of Cubism admired for its compositional and colouristic subtleties.

Bush, Jack (Canadian, 1909–1977)
A member of Painters Eleven, formed in 1953, Bush found his real voice only

after critic Clement Greenberg visited his studio in 1957 and focused on his watercolours. Out of these Bush developed the shapes and broad colour planes that would come to characterize a personal colour-field style, parallel to the work of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. With them, Bush participated in Greenberg's 1964 exhibition *Post Painterly Abstraction*.

Chevreul, Michel-Eugène (French, 1786–1889)
A chemist whose work on colour perception had a great impact on the development of Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism at the end of the nineteenth century. Chevreul's hypotheses arose from his observations as director of the Gobelins dye-works in Paris.

colour-field painting
A term first used to describe Abstract Expressionist works that use simplified or minimalist forms of flat or nuanced colour, as in paintings by Morris Louis. It was later applied to works by such artists as Kenneth Noland and Barnett Newman in the United States and Jack Bush in Canada, whose geometric or abstract motifs highlight variations in colour. Post-Painterly Abstraction, a description coined by the critic Clement Greenberg, includes colour-field painting.

Colville, Alex (Canadian, 1920–2013)
A painter, muralist, draftsman, and engraver whose highly representational images verge on the surreal. Colville's paintings typically depict everyday scenes of rural Canadian life imbued with an uneasy quality. Since his process was meticulous—the paint applied dot by dot—he produced only three or four paintings or serigraphs per year. (See *Alex Colville: Life & Work* by Ray Cronin.)

Conceptual art
Traced to the work of Marcel Duchamp but not codified until the 1960s, Conceptual art is a general term for art that emphasizes ideas over form. The finished product may even be physically transient, as with land art or performance art.

Cubism
A radical style of painting developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914, defined by the representation of numerous perspectives at once. Cubism is considered crucial to the history of modern art for its enormous international impact; famous practitioners also include Juan Gris and Francis Picabia.

Dumouchel, Albert (Canadian, 1916–1971)
A painter, printmaker, and educator. Over the course of his career Dumouchel worked variously in surrealist, abstract, and figurative modes, producing a body of work that reflects the trajectory of modern art in Quebec. In 1948 he signed the *Prisme d'yeux* manifesto spearheaded by the painter Alfred Pellan.

Etrog, Sorel (Romanian/Canadian, 1933–2014)
A painter, illustrator, draftsman, and filmmaker, Etrog was known principally as a sculptor, creating variously sized abstract works reflecting the human form. One of his many commissions was the bronze statuette known from 1968 to

1980 as the Etrog, the award for excellence presented to Canadian filmmakers, subsequently called the Genie. His work is in important public and private collections in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

Gagnon, Charles (Canadian, 1934–2003)
A Montreal artist who worked indiscriminately across a variety of media, including film, photography, collage, and box constructions, as well as painting. During 1956–60 Gagnon studied in New York, immersing himself in the city's avant-garde world of experimental art. Back in Montreal his painting, especially his use of hard edges, was often associated with that of his Plasticien contemporaries.

Greenberg, Clement (American, 1909–1994)
A highly influential art critic and essayist known primarily for his formalist approach and his contentious concept of modernism, which he first outlined in his 1961 article "Modernist Painting." Greenberg was, notably, an early champion of Abstract Expressionists, including Jackson Pollock and the sculptor David Smith.

Group of Seven
A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

hard-edge painting
A technical term coined in 1958 by the art critic Jules Langsner, referring to paintings marked by well-defined areas of colour. It is widely associated with geometric abstraction and the work of artists such as Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland.

Herbin, Auguste (French, 1882–1960)
Following early forays into Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, Herbin dedicated himself to abstraction for the remainder of his career. His long-held interest in colour theory culminated in the 1949 publication *L'art non-figuratif non-objectif*, which formulated links between colours, forms, musical notes, and letters of the alphabet.

Jauran (Canadian, 1928–1959)
A painter, photographer, and art critic, Rodolphe de Repentigny, know as Jauran, was a founding member of the Plasticiens. He wrote the group's 1955 manifesto and promoted a rigorous geometric abstraction over the Automatistes' subjective expressionism.

Jérôme, Jean-Paul (Canadian, 1928–2004)
A founding member of the Plasticiens and, in the 1950s, the most idiosyncratic artist of the group. He left Montreal for Paris in 1957 and worked more lyrically, until, toward the end of his career, he returned to a complex, highly colourful use of geometry.

Johns, Jasper (American, b. 1930)
One of the most significant figures in twentieth-century American art, Johns—a painter, printmaker, and sculptor—is credited, with Robert Rauschenberg, with renewing interest in figurative painting following Abstract Expressionism's dominance of the New York scene. Among his best-known works are those incorporating the motif of the American flag.

Kandinsky, Wassily (Russian, 1866–1944)
An artist, teacher, and philosopher who settled in Germany and later in France, Kandinsky was central to the development of abstract art. Much of his work conveys his interest in the relationships between colour, sound, and emotion. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), his famous treatise on abstraction, draws on mysticism and theories of divinity.

Kelly, Ellsworth (American, b. 1923)
An abstract artist from New York who matured in Paris, where he studied from 1948 to 1954, enabled by the G.I. Bill. Back in the United States he practised hard-edge colour-field painting, but, even as his rigorous style often approached Minimalism, his visual wit drew from his observations of natural forms.

Le Moyne, Suzanne Rivard (Canadian, 1928–2012)
A painter, educator, and fine arts advocate in Canada from the 1960s to the 1980s. Le Moyne was head of visual arts at both the Canada Council for the Arts and the University of Ottawa; in 1972 she established the Canada Council Art Bank, now the country's largest collection of contemporary art.

Lismer, Arthur (British/Canadian, 1885–1969)
A landscape painter and founding member of the Group of Seven, Lismer immigrated to Canada from England in 1911. He was also an influential educator of adults and children, and he created children's art schools at both the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (1933) and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1946).

Lochhead, Kenneth (Canadian, 1926–2006)
Although Lochhead's career spanned numerous styles, he is perhaps best known for his colour-field paintings of the 1960s and 1970s. Directly inspired by Barnett Newman and the critic Clement Greenberg, he was instrumental in bringing the principles of modernist abstract painting to Regina, where he was director of the University of Saskatchewan's School of Art.

Louis, Morris (American, 1912–1962)
A painter perhaps best known for the series of stained canvases he made in the 1950s after seeing the work of Helen Frankenthaler. Along with fellow Washington artist Kenneth Noland, he became a major exponent of colour-field painting, the stylistic successor to Abstract Expressionism, which the critic Clement Greenberg would champion as Post-Painterly Abstraction.

Matisse, Henri (French, 1869–1954)
A painter, sculptor, printmaker, draftsman, and designer, aligned at different times with the Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and Fauvists. By the 1920s he was, with Pablo Picasso, one of the most famous painters of his generation, known for his remarkable use of colour and line.

McEwen, Jean (Canadian, 1923–1999)
Although he painted with the gestural and impasto techniques of the Automatistes, McEwen is properly called a post-Automatiste painter because of the more structured and rigorous procedures of his signature all-over surfaces of texture and variegated hues. In Paris in 1952–53, he came under the influence of Jean-Paul Riopelle and Sam Francis, and with them discovered the work of Claude Monet.

Minimalism
A branch of abstract art characterized by extreme restraint in form, most popular among American artists from the 1950s to 1970s. Although Minimalism can be expressed in any medium, it is most commonly associated with sculpture; principal Minimalists include Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and Tony Smith. Among the Minimalist painters were Agnes Martin, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella.

modernism
A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Beginning in painting with the Realist movement led by Gustave Courbet, it progressed through Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

Molinari, Guido (Canadian, 1933–2004)
A painter and theorist who was a member of the Plasticien movement in Montreal. His work, beginning in the mid-1950s, set new models for geometric painting internationally. His "razor-edged" Stripe Paintings create the illusion of a dynamic space, evoked by the viewer's active engagement with how colours appear to change as they rhythmically repeat themselves across the canvas.

Mondrian, Piet (Dutch, 1872–1944)
A leading figure in abstract art, known for his geometric "grid" paintings of straight black lines and brightly coloured squares, whose influence on contemporary visual culture has been called the most far-reaching of any artist. Mondrian saw his highly restrictive and rigorous style, dubbed Neo-Plasticism, as expressive of universal truths.

Neo-Plasticism
Piet Mondrian's term for his highly reduced mode of abstract art, characterized by black grid structures organizing tautly balanced flat planes of colour, using

only the three primary colours, as well as white. Neo-Plasticism profoundly influenced the advancement of geometric art throughout Europe and spread to the United States, where Mondrian moved in 1940. It later inspired the Montreal Plasticiens.

Newman, Barnett (American, 1905–1970)
A key proponent of Abstract Expressionism, known primarily for his colour-field paintings. Newman's writings of the 1940s argue for a break from European artistic traditions and the adoption of techniques and subject matter more suited to the troubled contemporary moment, and for the expression of truth as he saw it.

Noland, Kenneth (American, 1924–2010)
Like his colleague Morris Louis, Noland turned to stain painting after seeing the work of Helen Frankenthaler in 1953. More geometric and hard-edge than Louis, he also, in the 1960s, became a major exponent of colour-field painting, the stylistic successor to Abstract Expressionism, which the critic Clement Greenberg would champion as Post-Painterly Abstraction.

Op art
A style of abstract art that was developed in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily by Victor Vasarely and the British artist Bridget Riley. It aimed to produce an intense visual experience through the use of severe colour contrasts and hard-edge forms.

Plasticiens
A Montreal-based artists' group active from 1955 to 1959. Although not opposed to their contemporaries the Automatistes, the Plasticiens encouraged a more formalist, less subjective approach to abstract art, such as that of Neo-Plasticist Piet Mondrian. Members included Louis Belzile, Jean-Paul Jérôme, Fernand Toupin, and Jauran (Rodolphe de Repentigny).

Pop art
A movement of the late 1950s to early 1970s in Britain and the United States, which adopted imagery from commercial design, television, and cinema. Pop art's most recognized proponents are Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein.

Post-Painterly Abstraction
A style of modernist painting championed by the critic Clement Greenberg, who invented the term as the title for a significant exhibition he curated for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art that also toured to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. The style favoured the openness and clarity of thinly applied planes of colour. Artists associated with the style include Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and the Canadians Jack Bush and Kenneth Lochhead.

postmodernism
A broad art historical category of contemporary art that uses both traditional and new media to deconstruct cultural history and deploys theory in its attack on modernist ideals. Canadian postmodern artists include Janice Gurney, Mark Lewis, Ken Lum, and Joanne Tod.

Rothko, Mark (American, 1903–1970)
A leading figure of Abstract Expressionism, Rothko began his career as an illustrator and watercolourist. In the late 1940s he developed the style that would come to define his career, creating intense colour-field oil paintings that express the same anxiety and mystery that informed his earlier figurative work.

Toupin, Fernand (Canadian, 1930–2009)
A painter and founding member of the Plasticiens. Like the others in this group of avant-garde artists—Jauran (Rodolphe de Repentigny), Louis Belzile, and Jean-Paul Jérôme—Toupin was interested in formalist abstraction and the two-dimensionality of painting. He achieved early critical success with his “shaped,” or non-rectangular, canvases.

Tousignant, Claude (Canadian, b. 1932)
A painter and sculptor whose large, flat, stark painting contributed to laying the ground rules for Plasticien painting in Montreal. During the 1960s he painted large round canvases of brightly coloured concentric circles that produce dynamic optical effects. His later work, often monochromatic, increasingly emphasizes the objectness of painting.

SOURCES & RESOURCES



As one of the leading artists of the Plasticien generation, which matured in Montreal in the 1960s, Gaucher was constantly in the public eye. He exhibited both in Canada and internationally, and his work has been subject to critical discussions in books, journals, and exhibition catalogues.

MAJOR SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Gaucher's paintings, as well as prints, were exhibited frequently during his lifetime, at galleries, museums, and other public institutions. For the most comprehensive list of his exhibitions, consult the catalogue for his posthumous exhibition, *Yves Gaucher*, held at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in 2004.



Installation of Gaucher's *Red, Brown, Blue, Yellow, Green, Ochre No. 11*, 1974, at Galerie René Blouin, Montreal, 2011

1963	November 9–30, 1963, *Yves Gaucher: Prints*, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York.
1965	April 19–May 1, 1965, *Danses carrées / Square Dances*, Galerie Agnès Lefort, Montreal.
1966	September 13–October 1, 1966, *Yves Gaucher*, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York. Catalogue.
1967	April 19–May 21, 1967, *Yves Gaucher*, Winnipeg Art Gallery. Catalogue.
1969	April 23–May 18, 1969, *Yves Gaucher: Grey Series*, Vancouver Art Gallery. Travelled to Edmonton Art Gallery, May 29–June 19, 1969; Whitechapel Gallery, London, England, October 11–November 11, 1969. Catalogue.
1970	January 27–February 14, 1970, *Yves Gaucher: Graphics 57–67*, Weissman Gallery, Sir George Williams University, Montreal. Travelled to Gallery Moos, Toronto.

1973	April 14–May 10, 1973, *Gaucher: Nine Blue Paintings / Neuf tableaux bleus*, Marlborough Godard Gallery, Toronto.
1975	March 13–April 27, 1975, *Yves Gaucher*, New York Cultural Center. Catalogue.
1976	October 1–November 7, 1976, *Yves Gaucher, peintures et gravures / Paintings and Etchings: Perspective 1963–76.* Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Catalogue.
1977	April 23–May 29, 1977, *Yves Gaucher & Christopher Pratt*, Vancouver Art Gallery. Travelled to Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, October 4–30, 1977; Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, December 8–January 8, 1977; Winnipeg Art Gallery, April 1978. Catalogue.
1979	March 17–April 29, 1979, *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective / Une perspective de quinze ans, 1963–1978*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Travelled to Glenbow Museum, Calgary, September 1–October 28, 1979. Catalogue.
1980	December 6–January 13, 1980, *Yves Gaucher: Série Jéricho 1978*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.
1983	April 15–May 29, 1983, *Yves Gaucher: Tableaux et gravures / Paintings and Etchings*, Centre culturel canadien, Paris, France. Travelled to Centre culturel du Canada, Brussels, June 8–September 23, 1983; Canada House Cultural Centre Gallery, London, England, November 17, 1983–January 10, 1984. Catalogue.
1985	March 9–27, 1985, *Yves Gaucher: Square Paintings*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.
1988	March 5–23, 1988, *Yves Gaucher: Dark Paintings*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.
1989	April 22–May 6, 1989, *Yves Gaucher*, 49th Parallel, Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, New York. November 25–December 22, 1989, *Yves Gaucher: Pale Paintings*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. Catalogue.
1992	November 14–December 19, 1992, *Yves Gaucher*, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto. Catalogue.
1992–93	November 13, 1992–January 3, 1993, *Yves Gaucher 1978–1992: Abstract Practices II*, The Power Plant, Toronto. Catalogue.
1995	March 30–May 6, 1995, *Yves Gaucher: Recent Work / Oeuvres récentes*, Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Montreal. Catalogue.

1996	October 16–November 23, 1996, *Yves Gaucher: Profil 1957–1996; 40 années de gravures / Yves Gaucher: Profile 1957–1996; 40 Years of Printmaking*, Galerie Simon Blais, Montreal. Book.
1999–2000	October 28, 1999–March 5, 2000, *Yves Gaucher: Récurrences*, Musée du Québec. Catalogue.
2003–04	October 10, 2003–January 11, 2004, *Yves Gaucher*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Catalogue.

MAJOR BOOKS AND CATALOGUES

Gaucher's work has been subject to critical discussions in magazines and journals as well as in exhibition catalogues and in other monographs. The first comprehensive stylistic discussion of his development was Roald Nasgaard's *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective / Une perspective de quinze ans, 1963–1978*, the catalogue for the exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1979. For a comprehensive bibliography consult the catalogue for his posthumous exhibition, *Yves Gaucher*, held at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in 2004.

Campbell, James D. *The Asymmetric Vision: Philosophical Intuition and Original Experience in the Art of Yves Gaucher*. Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1989.

———."The Claims of Experience." In *Aspects of Yves Gaucher's Art: 1978–1992*. Toronto: The Power Plant / Contemporary Art Gallery, 1993. Exhibition catalogue.

Marchand, Sandra Grant, Roger Bellemare, Danielle Blouin, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, and David Tomas. *Yves Gaucher*. Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2004. Bilingual exhibition catalogue of the first posthumous survey exhibition. Includes individual essays on Gaucher's printmaking (Danielle Blouin, "An Unusual Printmaker") and his relation to music (Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Webern/Gaucher: The Jolt"), detailed chronology, and bibliography.

Martin, Michel. *Yves Gaucher: Récurrences*. Quebec: Musée du Québec, 2000. Exhibition catalogue.

Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. *Yves Gaucher, peintures et gravures / Paintings and Etchings: Perspective 1963–76*. Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1976. Exhibition catalogue with full-length French texts of reviews by John Noel Chandler, Michel Ragon, Bryan Robertson, Normand Thériault, and David Thompson.

Nasgaard, Roald. *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective / Une perspective de quinze ans, 1963–1978*. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979. Exhibition catalogue.

Nasgaard, Roald, and Michel Martin. *The Plasticiens and Beyond: Montreal, 1955–1970*. Quebec: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec; Markham, ON: Varley Art Gallery of Markham, 2013.

New York Cultural Center. *Yves Gaucher*. New York: New York Cultural Center, 1975. Exhibition catalogue with short texts and excerpts from past international exhibition reviews by Dore Ashton, John Noel Chandler, Nigel Gosling, Michel Ragon, Bryan Robertson, John Russell, Doris Shadbolt, and David Thompson.

Roberge, Gaston. *Autour de Yves Gaucher*. Quebec: Le Loup de Gouttière, 1996. English translation by Suzanne Maloney, *Around and About Yves Gaucher* (Montreal: Galerie Simon Blais, 1996).

Shadbolt, Doris. *Yves Gaucher*. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1969. Catalogue for the exhibition that also showed at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, England.

WRITINGS BY GAUCHER

The manifesto that Gaucher wrote in 1965 in English for *Canadian Art* magazine was never published.

A French version was published in Jacques Folch, "Yves Gaucher," *Vie des Arts*, no. 41 (Winter 1965/66): 40–43. For the latter, along with an unpublished brief English summary, see Roald Nasgaard, *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective / Une perspective de quinze ans, 1963–1978* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979), 46–47. Gaucher here speaks of his painting in terms of "relations of indetermination," terminology that parallels Guido Molinari's (1933–2004) (as per the philosopher Alfred Korzybski) "principle of non-identity," and Claude Tousignant's (b. 1932) "non-determination."



Gaucher in his studio on Roslyn Avenue, Montreal, 1960.

INTERVIEWS AND FILM

Two taped interviews with Gaucher, one by Virgil Hammock, November 18, 1973; and another by Chris Youngs, 1974 (video), are held by the artist's estate and remain unpublished.

Gagnon, Charles. *R69*. Film (unfinished), 1969. In *Charles Gagnon: 4 Films*, directed by Monika Kin Gagnon. Montreal: Spectral Media, 2009. DVD.

The film includes footage of Gaucher working on his red painting *R69*, executed as a total negation of his Grey on Grey period. *R69* also includes an interview with Gaucher and with other major Montreal artists filmed during the opening of the exhibition *Grands formats*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1970. The interview reveals the mischievous side of Gaucher's character.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROALD NASGAARD

Roald Nasgaard is an award-winning author and curator, Officer of the Order of Canada, and professor emeritus, Florida State University. He began his teaching career at the University of Guelph in 1971 and then served from 1974 to 1993 as curator of contemporary art and chief curator at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). From 1995 to 2006 he chaired the art department and until 2011 taught art history at Florida State University.

During his tenure at the AGO he was responsible for a range of significant Canadian and international acquisitions. The many exhibitions he curated include solo shows for Canadian artists Yves Gaucher, Garry Neill Kennedy, Peter Kolisnyk, and Ron Martin. In 1985, in collaboration with Germano Celant, he produced the exhibition *The European Iceberg: Creativity in Italy and Germany Today*. He curated the first Gerhard Richter retrospective exhibition in North America in 1988.

Since 1994 Roald Nasgaard has written exhibition catalogue texts dedicated to the work of Trevor Bell, Charles Burchfield, Chris Cran, Jochen Gerz, John Heward, John Kissick, François Lacasse, Marie Lannoo, Guido Molinari, Odili Donald Odita, and William Perehudoff. He is the author of *The Mystic North: Symbolist Landscape Painting in Northern Europe and North America, 1890–1940* (1984) and the highly respected *Abstract Painting in Canada* (2008). He co-wrote *The Automatiste Revolution: Montreal 1941–1960* (2009) and curated the exhibition, which was ranked first in *Canadian Art* magazine's Top 10 Exhibitions of 2009 in Canada. His book and exhibition *The Plasticiens and Beyond: Montreal, 1955–1970* (2013), co-curated with Michel Martin, opened at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec to excellent reviews. Most recently he co-curated *Mystical Landscapes* (AGO, 2016, and Musée d'Orsay, 2017) and *Higher States: Lawren Harris and His American Contemporaries* (the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and Glenbow Museum, 2017).



"Yves Gaucher's work was the subject of my first Zacks Gallery exhibition at the AGO after I became the Curator of Contemporary Art. Gaucher shunned the word 'retrospective,' so we called the show *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978*. While preparing the exhibition I became close friends with Yves and his wife, Germaine, and was a regular visitor to their house and to his studio in Montreal. I was fortunate, therefore, over the next many years, to be able to watch the evolution of Yves Gaucher's work in real time, and had many opportunities to write further about it."

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the Author

I have been looking at, exhibiting, and writing about Gaucher's work for many decades. There are thus so many people that I have acknowledged along the way. For this online art book, let me therefore give my deepest posthumous thanks to Yves himself, for our many conversations, and to both him and his wife, Germaine, for their long friendship. Many thanks to the outstanding editorial and web team at the ACI, especially my editor, Meg Taylor, as well as Ruth Gaskill, Gaeby Abrahams, and Françoise Charron, for their meticulous work.

From the Art Canada Institute

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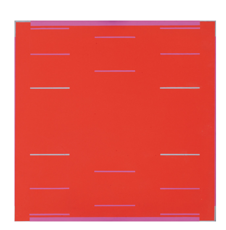


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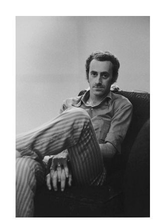
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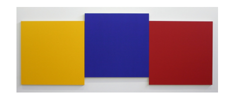


Yves Gaucher, *Study for "Six Squares,"* 1966. Private collection. Photograph courtesy of Sotheby's Inc. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

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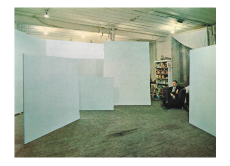
Biography: Gaucher in 1971, photographed by Gabor Szilasi. (See below for details.)



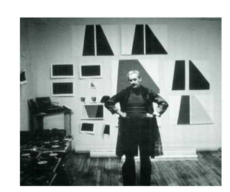
Key Works: Yves Gaucher, *Yellow, Blue & Red IV*, 1999. (See below for details.)



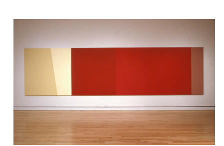
Significance & Critical Issues: Charles Gagnon, *R69*, 1969– (unfinished). (See below for details.)



Style & Technique: Gaucher in his studio with the Grey on Grey series paintings. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Gaucher in his studio on De Bullion Street, Montreal, 1979. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



Where to See: Installation view of *Reds & Ps*, 1992, by Yves Gaucher. (See below for details.)

Credits for Works by Yves Gaucher



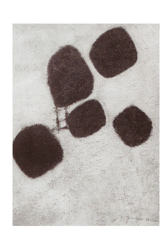
Alap, 1967. Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



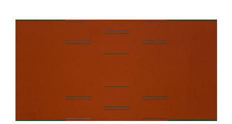
Asagao, 1961. Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



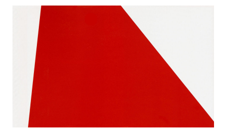
Blue Raga, 1967. Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



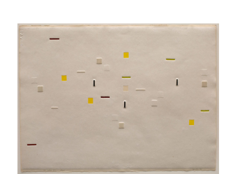
Conclusion 230, 1959–60. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



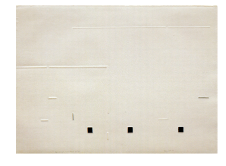
Dusk, Calm, Signals, 1966. Galerie Simon Blais, Montreal. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



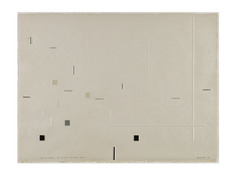
Er-Rcha, 1978. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



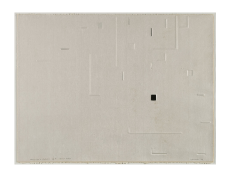
Fold upon Fold (Pli selon pli), 1964. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



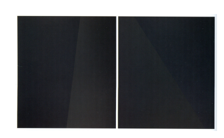
In Homage to Webern No. 1 (En hommage à Webern no. 1), 1963. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



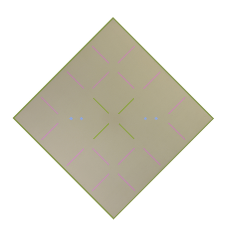
In Homage to Webern No. 2 (En hommage à Webern no. 2), 1963. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



In Homage to Webern No. 3 (En hommage à Webern no. 3), 1963. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Jericho 1: An Allusion to Barnett Newman (Une allusion à Barnett Newman), 1978. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



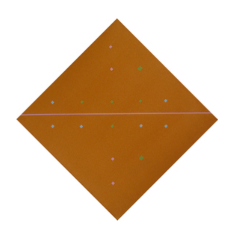
Le cercle de grande réserve, 1965. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the McLean Foundation, 1966. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



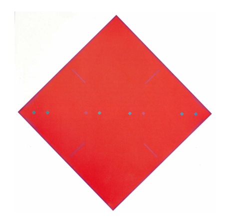
R-M-111 N/69, 1969. Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



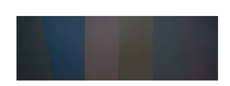
Sgana, 1962. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Square Dance: Bold Mauve I (Danse carrée: Gros mauve I), 1964. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Alison and Alan Schwartz, 1966. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Square Dance, Red Modulations, 1965. Private collection. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



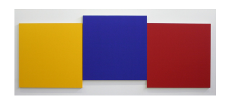
T.D.S., 1988. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Two Blues, Two Greys, 1976. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase: Horsely and Annie Townsend Bequest and Canada Council Grant. Photo: MMFA. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Untitled (JN-J1 68 G-1), 1968. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe, VAG 79.17. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).



Yellow, Blue & Red IV (Jaune, bleu & rouge IV), 1999. Photo: Arsenal Gallery. © Estate of Yves Gaucher / SODRAC (2015).

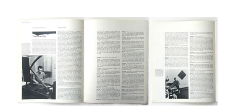
Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists



Album cover for *Morning and Evening Ragas* by Ali Akbar Khan.



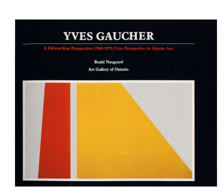
Arthur Lismer in Montreal in 1967, photographed by Sam Tata. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Sam Tata.



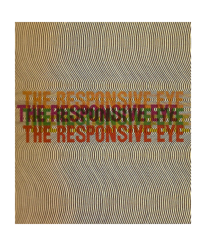
“Artist in Perspective: Yves Gaucher Interviewed,” by M.E. Cutler, *Canadian Art* 22 (1965). © The Society for Art Publications.



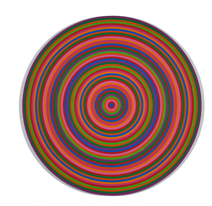
C, 1964, by Kenneth Noland. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from Corporations' Subscription Fund, 1965. © Kenneth Noland / SODRAC (2015).



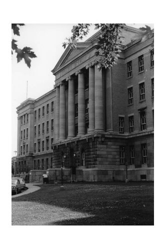
Catalogue for the 1979 exhibition *Yves Gaucher: A Fifteen-Year Perspective, 1963–1978*, by Roald Nasgaard (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1979).



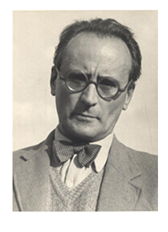
Catalogue for *The Responsive Eye*, by William C. Seitz (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965).



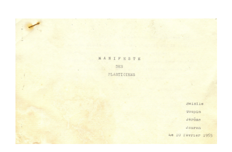
Chromatic Accelerator, 1968, by Claude Tousignant. Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. Courtesy of the artist.
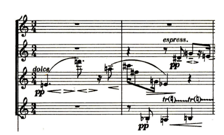


Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, at 3200 Côte-Sainte-Catherine, Montreal.



Composer and conductor Anton Webern. Photographer unknown.



Cover of the Plasticien manifesto. Courtesy of Robert Jérôme, Jérôme Art International, Montreal.



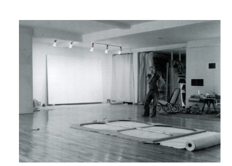
First bars of Anton Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*.



Gaucher at the École des beaux-arts in Montreal, c. 1954–55. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



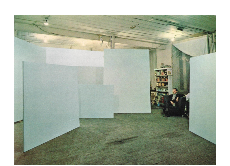
Gaucher holding a paint roller in his studio on Saint-Paul Street East, Montreal, c. 1968–69. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



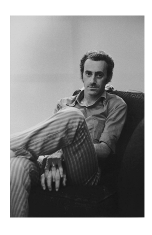
Gaucher in his studio on De Bullion Street, Montreal, 1979. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



Gaucher in his studio on Roslyn Avenue, Montreal, 1960. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



Gaucher in his studio with the Grey on Grey series paintings. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



Gaucher in 1971, photographed by Gabor Szilasi. Courtesy of Gabor Szilasi.



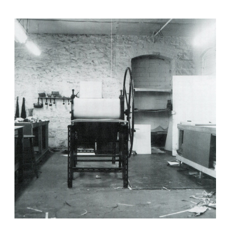
Gaucher in 1996, photographed by Richard-Max Tremblay.



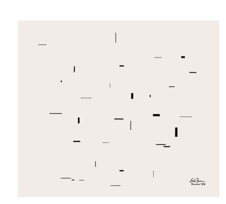
Gaucher playing the vibraphone, c. 1951–52. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



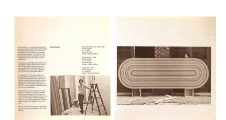
Gaucher working on a serigraph in his studio on Roslyn Avenue, Montreal, c. 1959. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



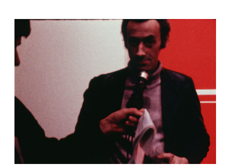
Gaucher's studio on Albert Street, Montreal, 1963. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



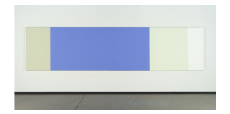
Graphic score for Earle Brown's "December 1952." © 1961 – Associated Music Publishers – Schirmer (New York).



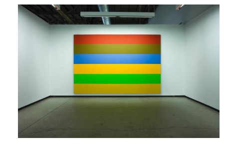
Guido Molinari and Claude Tousignant with their paintings. Published in David Silcox, *Canada 101: Edinburgh International Festival; Paintings and Sculpture by 22 Canadian Artists* (Ottawa: Canada Council, 1968).



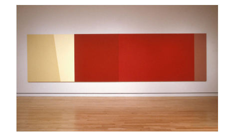
In Gagnon's film Gaucher is interviewed by Klaus Fuchs in front of his painting *R69*. Still from *R69*, 1969–(unfinished), by Charles Gagnon. Courtesy of the Estate of Charles Gagnon.



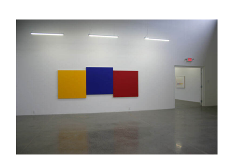
Installation view of *B2 + w Ps*, 1989-90, by Yves Gaucher. Photograph by Richard-Max Tremblay. Courtesy Galerie René Blouin, Montreal.



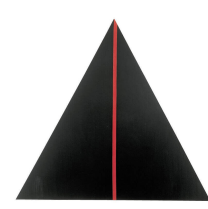
Installation view of *Red, Brown, Blue, Yellow, Green, Ochre No. 11*, 1974, by Yves Gaucher. Photograph by Richard-Max Tremblay. Courtesy Galerie René Blouin, Montreal. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



Installation view of *Reds & Ps*, 1992, by Yves Gaucher. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.
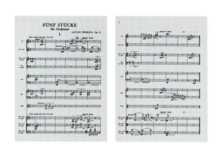


Installation view of *Yellow, Blue & Red IV (Jaune, bleu & rouge IV)*, 1999, by Yves Gaucher. Photograph by Dominique Toutant. Courtesy of Division Gallery, Toronto, and Germaine Gaucher.



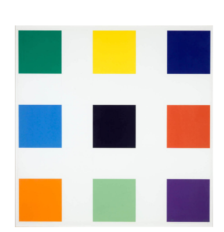
Jericho, 1968–69, by Barnett Newman. Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © The Barnett Newman Foundation, New York / SODRAC (2015).



Luncheon on the Grass, 1965, by Charles Gagnon. Collection of Pierre Lassonde. Courtesy of the Estate of Charles Gagnon.



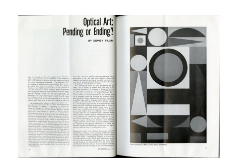
Musical score for Anton Webern's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 10, first movement.



Nine Squares, 1976–77, by Ellsworth Kelly. © Tate, London 2014.

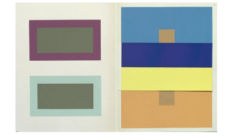


No. 1, White and Red, 1962, by Mark Rothko. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the Women's Committee Fund, 1962. © 2014 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko / SODRAC (2015).



Optical Art:
Pending or Ending?

"Optical Art: Pending or Ending?" by Sidney Tillim, in *Arts Magazine*, January 1965. © Arts Magazine.



Pages from *Interaction of Color* by Josef Albers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).



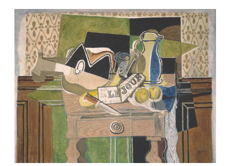
R69, 1969– (unfinished), by Charles Gagnon. Courtesy of the Estate of Charles Gagnon.



Rhythmic Mutation Bi-Yellow, 1965, by Guido Molinari. Musée d'art de Joliette. © Estate of Guido Molinari / SODRAC (2015).



Jack Bush, *Sea Deep*, 1965. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase: grant from the Government of Canada under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, and gift of Elca, Jonas and Mark London. Photo: MMFA. © Estate of Jack Bush / SODRAC (2015).



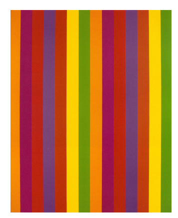
Still Life: Le jour, 1929, by Georges Braque. Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.91, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Suzanne Rivard Le Moyne painting in Paris in 1959. Photograph by Fred Bruemmer. Courtesy of the Estate of Fred Bruemmer.



Three-year-old Yves Gaucher in 1937. Courtesy of Germaine Gaucher.



Untitled, 1967, by Guido Molinari. © Estate of Guido Molinari / SODRAC (2015).



Verticales descendant des mauves, 1962, by Jean McEwen. Joan and Martin Goldfarb Collection, York University, Toronto. © Estate of Jean McEwen / SODRAC (2015).



Victory Boogie Woogie, 1942–44, by Piet Mondrian. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

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